

HOWARD KIMELDORF INTERVIEWS FOR *REDS OR RACKETS?*
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FRED RICHARDSON AND GUS RYSTAD OF ILWU LOCAL 19

INTERVIEWEES: FRED RICHARDSON, GUS RYSTAD

INTERVIEWER: HOWARD KIMELDORF

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[00:00:00] **HOWARD:** Spell your name just so we got it for the records.

[00:00:02] **FRED:** F-R-E-D. R-I-C-H-A-R-D-S-O-N.

[00:00:07] **HOWARD:** Gus?

[00:00:08] **GUS:** Yeah, Gus Rystad. R-Y-S-T-A-D.

[00:00:11] **HOWARD:** Okay and Gus is G-U-S? That's easy, okay.

We've already talked generally about what the research is intending to deal with—

[00:00:18] **OUTSIDE:** I'm not trying to eavesdrop you fellows, I was just getting tired of walking across here.

[00:00:21] **HOWARD:** [chuckles] Ignore him, he's the janitor. Thanks for the record.

[00:00:28] **FRED:** Been on the record too!

[00:00:29] **HOWARD:** Why don't you tell me, Fred, how you got started on the waterfront. The first year you came on and why you came on and what the working conditions were like at that time, as best that you could remember.

[00:00:39] **FRED:** Well, I was going to high school in Seattle [Washington], at Queen Anne High School. It was written on all the docks, there was an adjacent dock to where we lived. And we'd go down and line-up on the docks on Saturdays and Sundays to get work.

[00:00:55] **HOWARD:** What year was about this? Do you remember?

[00:00:56] **FRED:** It was about 1911.

[00:01:01] **HOWARD:** Couldn't have been too old at that time, were you?

[00:01:03] **FRED:** I was 17 years old. Seventeen years old. Born about '95 .

Anyway, so then I used to work on weekends on the docks. And on those days we lined up, we'd wait for hours and hours waiting for the ships to come in. And the rain and all that kind of jazz. And they'd be about maybe at least six guys for every job. And they picked each man for the job. They paid us about 25 cents an hour! In those days. Twenty-five cents an hour. We worked 10 hours a day. And we unloaded the ships.

Then if you didn't produce that ship, then the foremen didn't like it—my idea of the foreman in those days was a big, ignorant guy that couldn't read or write, but he had a voice of a bull and you could hear him speak from one end of the ship to the other! That was my idea of a foreman. Then we'd go to work and we'd load the cars on them, boxcars with the cargo, which came from the Orient. And we were even so cheap that when we worked ten hours a day, they had make us switch for maybe five minutes, and they'd dock us those five minutes. And then from then on of course we worked and then went out in 1915 when the—I was out of high school then, and the docks weren't organized—

[00:02:32] **HOWARD:** The ILA [International Longshore Association] wasn't there at that time?

[00:02:34] **FRED:** The ILA was on those ships. Thirty-eight-twelve. But the men on the docks weren't organized. So then we had a meeting in a theater called the old [?Hammond Theater?] in Seattle here on Fifth [Avenue] and Pine [Street] , it was spring, maybe February—just winter was getting over.

[00:02:51] **HOWARD:** Can I ask you a question about that? So you're saying the men in the hall were organized, but the men on the docks weren't?

[00:02:55] **FRED:** That's correct.

[00:02:56] **HOWARD:** Why was that?

[00:02:57] **FRED:** Well, there was case of the times of the day, the labor was in the bad way for years, you know, we got this NRA [National Recovery Administration, an FDR New Deal agency] thing in 1933, we had

no way that were—the organization didn't mean much, we couldn't get that. The guys would sit down and they had no way of processing a claim—they didn't have the key committees and educated guys we got now. The port says, "You, you and you!" You'd go up and ask for a dollar a day! That's all the statistics you had! You couldn't compete with them brains up there that all said, "No, you can't get the buck,"—and you would hit the bricks.

[00:03:30] **HOWARD:** So the union really wasn't much of a factor then, even in the hall.

[00:03:33] **FRED:** Look what happened with the coal miners. They were organized, they go on strike, but they'd break their strikes—they didn't have a chance. There was no loss or protector that was the problem.

[00:03:43] **HOWARD:** So that was a union—

[00:03:44] **GUS:** I'll explain to you, basically, all locals for every union—every city was organized separately. And when one city was on strike, all the rest of them were fink.

[00:03:52] **HOWARD:** What was the purpose of union before you had collective bargaining?

[00:03:56] **FRED:** That's a good question. That's a good question.

[00:03:59] **HOWARD:** Just sort of moral support or something like that?

[00:04:01] **GUS:** That's an easy answer. Every working man was better off in a union. I don't care what a union is. Any man is better off when you're with other men because if you were tired and there were miners, you got beat. It is a similar way of some protection.

[00:04:17] **FRED:** I'll tell you what happened in the 1916 strike, there was the—the war was on. And there was a guy by the name of [Frank] Waterhouse.

[00:04:25] **HOWARD:** Oh. I know that name.

[00:04:26] **FRED:** He was—Waterhouse he had the Waterhouse Line [Frank Waterhouse and Co.] of ships—

[00:04:30] **GUS:** That's certainly what Rosco [the unknown voice] said there, that guys, just locally, began to feel the need for some common man, protection. But their ideas for some kind of protection had not expanded, sufficiently, to cover the whole coast. That was something that developed and grew and was explained by more farseeing people later. And then it later caught on. This is actually what Harry [Bridges] brought to us. On the East Coast, they don't have a coast-wide contract yet. But in 1934, brought both the idea and the reality of it into effect.

[00:05:17] **FRED:** Going back to 1916, the 1916 strike, that's when the first Black people came out here to Seattle.

[00:05:26] **HOWARD:** Is that right? In what capacity?

[00:05:27] **FRED:** As longshoremen.

[00:05:28] **HOWARD:** Not scabs, huh?

[00:05:30] **FRED:** Oh yeah, scabs indeed. They filled that fence on the docks and feeding them out on the barges.

[00:05:34] **HOWARD:** Why don't you tell me about the strike, can you remember much about it?

[00:05:37] **FRED:** Oh yes. I was just a young guy, you see.

[00:05:42] **HOWARD:** Now this is a coast-wide strike, wasn't it?

[00:05:44] **FRED:** It started a coast-wide strike but it broke up. But as Rosco said long ago, they started settling in port-by-port. San Francisco was the first port to give way. And we lost everything.

[00:05:54] **HOWARD:** And do you remember the demands?

[00:05:58] **FRED:** That's a good question.

[00:05:59] **HOWARD:** I think it was wage-demand, most of it was.

[00:06:01] **FRED:** It was a wage-demand, that's about it. But I'll tell you the incident what happened was this Waterhouse had two ships and that's where we were shipping barbed wire and kegs of nails up to Russia, you know, during the World War I, and so he had two ships, chartered, see. So he started arguing with our team—they wanted a dollar and a dollar and a half for an hour. Something like that. And he paid them what they were asking. And when they were loading the ships he locked them out. That happened in 1916.

Then of course the Stimson came along and this other fellow, you know, and they killed entire guys—the Wobblies, you heard about that. And the Verona that went up there when that occurred. Well it happened when I was—there was about eight of us young guys down here, and shingle weavers union was on strike. They come down and asked the eight of us to go up and they paid us 18 dollars a week and our room and board. And we were staying at a hotel—the shingle weavers had a hotel and a restaurant there. But we went down to the mill—called the Kimberly-Clark Mill. We go down in the morning and see the scabs go down to work. And around noon we went to the Labor Temple and then we'd go in the evening and watch the scabs come out. Of course a lot of things happened in the meantime that I'm not going to tell you about because it's off the record.

[00:07:14] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you some questions about this period. One of the things that I'm comparing to this early, before the '34 strike is the relative influence of the Wobblies in the West Coast versus in New York. You remember any idea of how many Wobblies there were on the waterfront? When you around in 1916?

[00:07:30] **FRED:** Yes, I have a general idea, I was a Wobbly.

[00:07:32] **HOWARD:** You were a Wobbly?

[00:07:33] **FRED:** I was a member of the Wobblies and we had all kinds of Wobblies that followed the—what was the name of that crazy winch driver? Lon? Long? Big Long! He was a Wobbly! And I remember one—

[00:07:49] **GUS:** Virgil.

[00:07:50] **FRED:** Huh?

[00:07:50] **GUS:** Virgil.

[00:07:52] **FRED:** Virgil was a Wobbly. He wasn't on the beach in those days, he was too young. I'm talking about 1916.

[00:07:57] **HOWARD:** How many guys were Wobblies among in the longshoremen in Seattle? Just approximately.

[00:08:03] **FRED:** Approximately, I would say at least 50 percent of us. Put it that way. Seventy-five percent, maybe.

[00:08:10] **HOWARD:** That's exactly what the employers estimated. I read a secret letter that they wrote in 1919—

[00:08:15] **GUS:** I'm surprised.

[00:08:16] **HOWARD:** They said 80 percent of them were Wobblies.

[00:08:18] **FRED:** Yeah.

[00:08:18] **GUS:** Yeah.

[00:08:19] **FRED:** Oh yeah, I was a Wobbly.

[00:08:20] **HOWARD:** It's interesting that you say that.

[00:08:20] **FRED:** Well, I was born in Ireland—

[00:08:23] **HOWARD:** So you say about 50 and 75 percent? Something like that?

[00:08:27] **FRED:** I would think so, yeah.

[00:08:28] **HOWARD:** Now what did it mean though, to be a Wobbly at that stage? Did it mean that you subscribed to the preamble of the Wobblies and you knew all the politics that they were talking about?

[00:08:36] **FRED:** They didn't have politics. That was the weakness. That was the weakness of those people. They didn't believe in good politics.

[00:08:40] **HOWARD:** Well, they had a conception of another society, certainly.

[00:08:42] **FRED:** Had a direct action was what it was. And I remember one guy, I forget his name, got pinched for dropping some of the stuff that you take off the water and it lights right away—did you ever study chemistry?

[00:08:54] **HOWARD:** No, what does it do?

[00:08:56] **FRED:** You take it out of the water and automatically it all comes up in flames. Sulfur.

[00:08:59] **HOWARD:** Oh. Sulfur.

[00:09:01] **FRED:** Sulfur—something like sulfur. I remember in my high school days I never studied chem, but they used to keep that in the water. You take it out of the water and it'd start burning. I remember they—

You see the theory with the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] was direct action. Direct action is what they wanted to do. And they wanted to destroy things, really. And the weakness with the Wobblies was—you know

our system is a two-party system, they wasn't—they were against politics. Absolutely against them. What would they do? They'd make a law over one night to put those guys out of business.

[00:09:34] **HOWARD:** And the Wobblies' response was that it doesn't matter, we have the power of the point of production.

[00:09:38] **FRED:** That's right. That's correct, they had control.

[00:09:40] **HOWARD:** And what was wrong with that? It seemed to fit the longshoremen.

[00:09:44] **FRED:** They didn't put the—the politics! That's what under our system, they had to. Because I'm guessing a law would put them out of business. Then Samuel Gompers [founder of the American Federation of Labor] come along and started breaking up the Wobblies, and the mines and started organizing all the mines. I got a book called The First Fifty Years of the IWW [The I.W.W.: Its First Fifty Years [1905-1955]: The History of an Effort to Organize the Working Class] .

[00:09:59] **HOWARD:** I got that too.

[00:10:00] **FRED:** You read that thing. It tells you all about them. I was up in Everett [Washington] just before the massacre. I had pneumonia, I had to come down here and they put me in the hospital up there and paid all the bills and sitting with me. And I came down here and I was recuperating with the Wobblies when the Verona went up! I knew all about it, see.

[00:10:17] **HOWARD:** How many guys in the waterfront were former lumber workers?

[00:10:20] **FRED:** Oh god, that's him. He can tell you about that.

[00:10:23] **HOWARD:** Were you a former lumber worker?

[00:10:24] **GUS:** Yes.

[00:10:26] **HOWARD:** Why don't you tell me how you got onto the waterfront, the years and how you got there?

[00:10:31] **GUS:** Well, I started working in Everett in the pulp mill now, in 1930. And I worked there until 1940. And I lost my job there when we were trying to join the IWA, International Woodworkers of America. They were CIO [Congress of Industrial Organization] . We had a labor party election. We had about 500 men were working in the plant there—1500 altogether in Everett. Which our local—first we organized a group of the young fellows, sort of under the leadership of a former longshoremen who had been injured on the docks, and then he got a job in the Water Department where all he did was turn on and off the air. Water air in the plants and so on.

But anyway, we organized the plant. Then we went out and helped the other two mills. 1500 sulfite workers, altogether to organize. Then our local leader, in 1940, although we have been meeting up and down the coast primarily with people from Washington, but it also included Milson, Oregon. And we had the general idea of building a united coast—a West Coast organization, independent of the AFL, which was under quite reactionary leadership. So later, we constantly had the idea of joining the IWA and we had the support of the leadership in that organization. And when we held the election we lost it by five votes.

[00:12:29] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:12:30] **GUS:** And then they fired a bunch of people and blacklisted us up there.

[00:12:35] **HOWARD:** So when did you get active in the waterfront?

[00:12:38] **GUS:** In nineteen—well, I started working here late in '43.

[00:12:44] **HOWARD:** 'Forty-three, okay.

[00:12:46] **GUS:** During the war.

[00:12:46] **HOWARD:** Okay. Yeah, that's an important issue that I want to talk to you about, the war and what it was like here.

[00:12:51] **GUS:** So all that he talks about here, I have only from hearsay, from what I talked to—I came on the other old-timers. There were a lot of old timers around here when I started working.

[00:13:03] **HOWARD:** Well, okay, as we go through this until we get to your period, if you have something to contribute feel free to do so based on hearsay or whatever.

[00:13:10] **FRED:** This article here covers a lot of the stuff that you're talking about.

[00:13:13] **HOWARD:** Okay, I'll take a look at that for sure.

[00:13:14] **FRED:** I don't want you to take it though.

[00:13:17] **HOWARD:** No, I won't.

[00:13:17] **FRED:** Why don't you make some copies of it.

[00:13:18] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I'll copy it.

[00:13:20] **FRED:** We got a machine in there and we might be able to copy some this stuff. It's very interesting.

Yeah, and I never read it before.

[00:13:28] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a few more questions about the Wobblies, you said around 1916 when you were on the waterfront, that about 50 to 75 percent of the longshoremen were Wobblies, approximately. What else can you tell me about the Wobblies involvement or impact on the men? Was it a significant force or was it just that they accepted the Wobblies because they were the only people there?

[00:13:48] **FRED:** I think they accepted them, but they weren't very much in love with them, because at that stage of the game, the Pinkerton people were moving into our unions. And their program was for the Pinkerton guy to get in there and work himself up in the leadership in the union. Didn't happen to mine, though. You know there was an Englishman who was the president of our local—and he was probably a good union man, I don't recall the details.

[00:14:13] **HOWARD:** What was his name? Do you remember?

[00:14:16] **FRED:** I got the name written down some place but I'll tell you what I did remember. The Secretary of that Trucker, the dockworkers, the name was [?Daniels?] and he was the secretary. I got the other guy's name down some place—

[00:14:27] **HOWARD:** Is it Percy May?

[00:14:27] **FRED:** No, no hell no, Percy May—

[00:14:29] **HOWARD:** You know him?

[00:14:29] **FRED:** I remember him, yeah, he was a trucker.

[00:14:33] **HOWARD:** I just got out of a library up in Seattle University and there's a series of reports issued by Agent 106 during the 1920 period? He's got a lot of information on the longshoremen.

[00:14:43] **FRED:** No, we have a picture here—

[00:14:45] **HOWARD:** He was, you know, intelligence. Espionage.

[00:14:46] **FRED:** Yeah, we got a picture of the 1917 convention here around Seattle, the ILA. You got the name of the President at that time. But I know a lot of them guys.

[00:14:58] **HOWARD:** Did you?

[00:14:58] **FRED:** Oh heck yes. Yes.

[00:15:03] **HOWARD:** What else can you tell me about the Wobblies? When did you go into the war I guess is the next question?

[00:15:08] **FRED:** When did I go? I'll tell you really is when I went to get out of going to jail.

[00:15:12] **HOWARD:** Why was that?

[00:15:13] **FRED:** Because I was a Wobbly.

[00:15:14] **HOWARD:** Oh.

[00:15:15] **FRED:** They were putting the Wobblies in jail in those days. That's the reason I went in the goddamn Army was to. . . [laughs]

[00:15:24] **HOWARD:** So you didn't particularly believe in the cause, in fighting the imperialist War?

[00:15:26] **FRED:** I didn't believe in the cause really, I joined the army to get away. I knew they were going to make me. That's what was in my mind I would have probably never done it, or certainly my hypothetical with me. Because I saw so many damn stuff going around.

Oh yeah I've reacted. Me and my brother Tom were active in the '16 strike, trying to eradicate with the flying squad.

[00:15:45] **HOWARD:** Oh is that right?

[00:15:46] **FRED:** And we had rubber holds that would light in the end. But I could tell you off the record.

[00:15:52] **HOWARD:** Should I put it off the record?

[00:15:53] **FRED:** Well, wait a minute, through this strategy we used towards the end war. One time we all got pinched.

[00:16:00] **HOWARD:** For what?

[00:16:02] **FRED:** For raising hell on the docks. Picketing. They put us in jail and were on the floor above the Emergency Ward in the city jail, the old city jail down there. And we all starting stomping and singing Wobbly songs. And the emergency hospital down below, they got to turn us loose, thought that we were going cave it down the doors there.

[00:16:24] **HOWARD:** The Wobblies were great there, they really were.

[00:16:28] **FRED:** Oh yes. Yeah, that's some of the highlights of our kind. It's been sort of years and years since I thought about that stuff. But towards the end of that war—well, I call it a war—we lost the strike. They had fences built all around the docks and they were feeding these guys in barges as you know.

[00:16:47] **HOWARD:** They brought up Blacks and scabs during that time.

[00:16:49] **FRED:** And right from Kansas City [Missouri] at that time turned out to big, fine guys. You know, I worked with lots of those guys and they were nice guys.

[00:16:56] **HOWARD:** Were they pro-union later on? Or were they—

[00:16:58] **FRED:** Oh yes. There was Old Man Brown, [?Gus Brown?] 's father was one of them.

[00:17:02] **GUS:** What about [Frank] Jenkins' father?

[00:17:04] **FRED:** No, Jenkins' father was in the army. Jenkins' father—I knew him. He was a sergeant in the Twenty-Fifth Infantry in the whole Black residence.

[00:17:11] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a question about that this is sort of, you know, hypothetical I guess. Did they bring in Blacks as a ploy of dividing workers deliberately or were they just the best source?

[00:17:20] **FRED:** No, it was to break the strike!

[00:17:22] **HOWARD:** Yeah, but why Black people?

[00:17:23] **FRED:** Because they were ignorant, they didn't know any different. That's all blamed on the ignorance of them people, they thought there would be there would be a job out there and they didn't know anything about trade unionism in Kansas City for crying out loud, what the hell do they know about the union thing?

[00:17:34] **HOWARD:** Well, what did they know about longshoring in Kansas City?

[00:17:37] **FRED:** Nothing!

[00:17:38] **GUS:** But don't you think that was the primary reason that was in the back of their minds?

[00:17:43] **FRED:** Oh yeah.

[00:17:44] **GUS:** Racism.

[00:17:45] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I'm wondering if that made it easier to split up workers.

[00:17:48] **FRED:** Oh I wouldn't be surprised, although we adopted them guys, you know, the funny thing—we were the union in the history of the labor movement at that time that had the Blacks and whites, as I recall, that were integrated and we accepted them guys.

[00:18:02] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a question of the Seattle Labor Movement at this time, as you may remember in 1918, 1919—

[00:18:08] **FRED:** I was in France then.

[00:18:08] **HOWARD:** Okay, but the labor movement in Seattle was incredibly progressive, at that time. They—

[00:18:13] **FRED:** Sure they had a—

[00:18:15] **HOWARD:** They passed resolutions to nationalize industries and things like that.

[00:18:17] **FRED:** Well, they had the general strike here.

[00:18:19] **HOWARD:** Okay, why do you think it was so left-wing in the city? These were conventional AFL craft unions. I read the proceedings and it's just phenomenal what they were talking about.

[00:18:29] **FRED:** Well, I would have myself filled that position with guys like me—see if they were all like me we would have had that movement.

[00:18:32] **HOWARD:** Why weren't they like you though? That's the question.

[00:18:34] **FRED:** I don't know why, I feel that my background is very simple. I was born and raised in Ireland, you see and the lords all owned the land and they would rent three to four acres to these poor Irish people and when they couldn't pay their rent they evicted them. I saw several of those evictions and that made a rebel out of me, right there. Right there and then I became a rebel.

[00:18:57] **GUS:** I'd like to make a comment here though. The Wobblies here on the West Coast—now, I have this mostly here from talking to people and what I've read—were most effective in the logging camps and they had some terrific leaders and the response was terrific because they revolutionized the logging camps. Before, they had to carry their own bed clothes and a lot of things like that.

[00:19:29] **FRED:** [inaudible] _____ they called it.

[00:19:30] **GUS:** And they cleaned up the barracks. And when the war came, the lumbermen organized the Loyal Loggers and Lumber Workers—

[00:19:46] **HOWARD:** Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen.

[00:19:49] **GUS:** Yeah, and that drove a lot of the—a lot of the Wobblies into the shipyards.

[00:19:58] **HOWARD:** I never thought about that connection that's right.

[00:20:01] **GUS:** And the shipyard was actually the basis for the terrific stance that Seattle took.

[00:20:08] **HOWARD:** So when they organized the foremen's union [ILWU Local] —

[00:20:10] **GUS:** And the general strike.

[00:20:11] **FRED:** The turn of the Wobblies, basically, they started, way back before 1915, started harassing the IWW in the city of Seattle, as I recall. They had their officers down on about Occidental [Avenue] and Washington [Street] in some way.

[00:20:22] **GUS:** It was a struggle, a fight all the way through.

[00:20:25] **FRED:** Well I tell you what happened. They had the soldiers and they had the army, they had the police department and they went into the Wobblies' headquarters and took all the furniture out and put out in Occidental and Washington and burned it right on the street. That was in 1915! [sic,] I recall that, you see. So the harassment started way back before the '16 strike.

[00:20:46] **HOWARD:** What the mood of the working people in Seattle during the 1916 strike for instance, were they supportive of you guys, or do you have any idea of that?

[00:20:54] **FRED:** That's a good question, I wasn't very gregarious of my—

[00:20:58] **OUTSIDE:** That's an easy one to answer, the people there were in support of the strike because the goddamn media is against you. [laugh]

[00:21:03] **FRED:** I'll tell you what, what we did to one guy there, fellow we were raised with. We beat him so badly that he ended up in the nuthouse. A guy we went to school with, down there in Western [Avenue] and—

[00:21:12] **HOWARD:** He was what? A scab?

[00:21:14] **FRED:** He was fink. A scab. You know where the word 'fink' started—it started in Seattle. Did you know that?

[00:21:18] **HOWARD:** Did it start in Seattle?

[00:21:19] **FRED:** Yeah, the fink hall? The word 'fink' came into a part of the English language. So as I understand, we got it in the dictionary. Fink originated, originally like Skid Row. That originated in Seattle too.

[00:21:32] **HOWARD:** It did. It's an interesting city.

[00:21:33] **FRED:** Yeah, it is. Skid Row, and I came before—

[00:21:37] **GUS:** Well, yeah but in Seattle it's not Skid Row, it's Skid Road.

[00:21:40] **FRED:** Yeah, they call it Skid Road.

[00:21:41] **HOWARD:** What? R-O-A-T? Or something?

[00:21:42] **FRED:** They call it Skid Row now. R-O-W.

[00:21:47] **GUS:** There was—at the foot of Yesler [Way] was the sawmill. And the logs were skidded down.

[00:21:55] **FRED:** Well there's a plaque. There's a brass thing there that I noticed there as I'm waiting for a bus, at First [Avenue] and Yesler [Way] to come down here on a job. There's a building called the Mutual Life Building there standing on the northwest corner, and there's a bronze plaque there. It tells the story where Yesler's mill had their big—where they fed the guys and their eating house there. Then they told about the bootlegging joints in that building during the war. It's right there. That northwest corner in First and Yesler.

[00:22:22] **HOWARD:** I'll check that out. You went into the war in 1917, 1918—something like that?

[00:22:26] **FRED:** 'Seventeen is when we got into the war.

[00:22:30] **HOWARD:** And when did you come back?

[00:22:32] **FRED:** 1919.

[00:22:33] **HOWARD:** You missed the general strike though?

[00:22:35] **FRED:** Oh yes. I saw the television—I saw pictures of the strike while I was staying in Hempstead, Long Island. I went, we were staged in Camp [Albert L.] Mills and I went down to the shore down there and saw the general strike. Saw the machine guns with the flatbeds, you know. Cement, gravel, you know.

[00:22:51] **HOWARD:** Before I forget, have you guys seen the movie Reds yet? You heard about that?

[00:22:57] **FRED:** No, I heard about that.

[00:22:57] **HOWARD:** It's John Reed's [journalist and social activist] life. You should see it. It covers that period between 1917 and 1920.

[00:23:00] **FRED:** When we read—there was a fellow, columnist who wrote a book here on the history of the '19 strike. He was a columnist.

[00:23:07] **HOWARD:** Harvey O'Connor?

[00:23:08] **FRED:** No, no, not Harvey O'Connor, another guy, he had an [?Italian?] name.

[00:23:11] **OUTSIDE:** Did you know him?

[00:23:12] **GUS:** Harvey O'Connor?

[00:23:13] **FRED:** Yes, I remember him, I know Harvey O'Connor. The days of the—the funny thing about this [?Strong?] . What's his first name?

[00:23:21] **GUS:** Anna Louise Strong [socialist journalist and activist] .

[00:23:24] **FRED:** Her brother—when I was playing football, her brother was a referee—he was very active in the YMCA and he went back to Bern, Switzerland as the head secretary because the war was on. But if you said, "Boo!" he'd kick you out for swearing.

[00:23:37] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:23:39] **GUS:** Strong wrote a pamphlet about the general strike, I suppose you've read that?

[00:23:44] **HOWARD:** I haven't seen it, it's a real [inaudible] _____ on the official history.

[00:23:46] **FRED:** Going back to what I—before I lose my trend, this fellow wrote the history of the strike in 1919 and in the beginning I was working for the International, then I was an organizer. I read the book. And [?Gettings?] one with my boss—he was a very progressive guy too. So I read it there and this guy made a statement and he said, "The only general strike that ever happened in this United States was in 1919 in Seattle!" I said to myself, "What the hell?" We had the general strike down in San Francisco in '34. So [?Gettings?] told the guy to change it in the next edition in the books. Yeah, but I saw the picture of that man. He's in Long Island.

[00:24:26] **HOWARD:** When did you come back? Do you remember what month you came back in 1919?

[00:24:28] **FRED:** It's about April or May or June somewhere.

[00:24:30] **HOWARD:** Did you go back on the waterfront?

[00:24:32] **FRED:** No, I went to the Seattle Fire Department. I drove horses in the Seattle Fire Department.

[00:24:36] **HOWARD:** You did? Do you remember the boycott of Russian rifles later in 1919 by longshoremen, do you remember that?

[00:24:44] **FRED:** I don't know, I wasn't here. But I remember they tied up some ships here. Heard about it, but I was in France, you see.

[00:24:50] **HOWARD:** In the latter part of 1919?

[00:24:51] **FRED:** No, the first part of '19. In the latter part I was here in Seattle. I was in the Seattle Fire Department.

[00:24:56] **HOWARD:** Yeah, because around September or October in 1919 the longshoremen led by Percy May, refused to handle rifles made by the Soviet Union.

[00:25:04] **FRED:** I remember that. I remember that.

[00:25:05] **HOWARD:** Do you remember anything else about?

[00:25:06] **FRED:** That's all I remember because I was mixed up in my own union in the fire department, because in those days, firemen couldn't participate in politics and they were part of the city ordinances. And we had the local, called Local 27, the International Firefighters and I was a member of that.

[00:25:21] **HOWARD:** Why did you go to the firemen instead of back to the waterfront or something? Do you remember?

[00:25:25] **FRED:** Well, that's a very simple thing, I was a singer. I sang for a living for years, you see. Professionally. I was on the canteen circuit. I was in the radio, I was on KOMO here [local television station] and I was studio director down there and all that kind of jazz. What was the question you asked me now?

[00:25:44] **HOWARD:** Why you became a fireman instead of going back to the waterfront?

[00:25:47] **FRED:** So when I was in France, my mother died. And there was nine in our family, you see. And when I came back, my father was drinking and my sister, she was the youngest one, and she was the change of

puberty in the womanhood and she had a nervous breakdown. And I was oldest one, and all my older brothers fled, you know? Flew from the nest, they were all fathers and married. So I had to support the family so I went to the Seattle Fire Department. And I had a [inaudible] _____ with the Seattle Fire Department and I got singing around there with Kane and Big Money this nightclub—nightclub bootleg joints down in then-Downtown watering houses, I went singing in there and concerts there where \$100 a day—it was nothing. That's where I met all the [?eggs?] [sic possible reference to the term “bad eggs”]. I know all about the underworld, all the hotheads, drunken detectives, bank robbers—anything you want that come up there. I used to get up there at one o'clock—one o'clock till six that was when the business was on.

[00:26:40] **HOWARD:** When did you go back to the waterfront? Do you remember?

[00:26:42] **FRED:** Nineteen thirty-four.

[00:26:42] **HOWARD:** So you came back around the strike then?

[00:26:45] **FRED:** Yeah, my two brothers were longshoring and I saw the handwriting on the wall, and I became to drink and all and I thought what the hell I'm ahead of the game, you know. I'd go back and get on the picket line and go to work.

[00:26:56] **HOWARD:** So exactly—did you join the union before the strike? Or during the strike?

[00:27:00] **FRED:** After the strike. I didn't get into the union until 1936.

[00:27:03] **HOWARD:** Oh. So you were a casual worker from 1934 to 1936?

[00:27:07] **FRED:** Yeah, I was a casual worker, but I was up in the union gang that worked after the '34 strike though. And I wasn't a member of the union. See we had—the only union gang who worked out of our old union hall was Western and Lenora there. Georgie Orr was an asked and he couldn't drive winch. We got all the dirty work, you see.

[00:27:23] **HOWARD:** What can you tell me about the '34 strike? Any interesting incidences?

[00:27:28] **FRED:** One interesting incident that I was involved in directly, was on the Point Wells killing.

[00:27:33] **HOWARD:** I don't know about that.

[00:27:34] **FRED:** There was a rumor come in that they were working up there. And a fellow [by] the name of [?Jack Shannon?] had a truck so we all got on this truck, went on after. Thought the finks were working—I don't know what the hell they could do, moving oil, you know, or pumping oil—what the hell they was a [inaudible] _____ —I think there was a frame-up.

So we all went out there, the first thing the guy did, they pulled a telephone off the wall and grabbed the watchman and gave him a kick in the butt and tell him to keep going. And then we had to walk on an incline and they started shooting. The guy next to me was Shelvy Daffron and they killed him. Shot him dead.

[00:28:09] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:28:10] **FRED:** He didn't die there, he died later on when we come back. I put him in the wagon to take him down to the hospital. We got up to the Virginia Mason Hospital to give him blood and the detective-sergeant comes out and he says, “He's dead.”

[00:28:20] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:28:21] **FRED:** Yeah that was in—

[00:28:22] **HOWARD:** So I never heard about that.

[00:28:24] **FRED:** Well that's—

[00:28:25] **HOWARD:** Somebody died here during the '34 strike, then?

[00:28:28] **FRED:** He died, yeah. He got killed. He got shot right next to me. It didn't seem to bother me too much because I just got out of the army and I was immune to that junk and the minute they started shooting, I hit the deck.

[00:28:37] **HOWARD:** So who shot exactly? Was it the scabs? Or the police?

[00:28:40] **FRED:** It was the watchmen, the guards on the ships that were hired by the oil company.

[00:28:47] **HOWARD:** Okay, so you guys basically went to deal with the scabs who were working on the ship.

[00:28:52] **FRED:** Yeah, we went after them and to confront them.

[00:28:54] **HOWARD:** But you think, actually there weren't any scabs on there?

[00:28:55] **FRED:** I don't think there were, there was a frame-up. All this time. Oh well what the hell could be done? There was no work out there. Usually on those tankers there's one hatch, usually to carry canned oil you know, that you'd put your oil. But they had what you called a bunker hatch. Not a bunker hatch, but there was hatch, at the forward end. And that's only thing that you need man power for. And the other thing was done mechanically by pumping oil, you see. And I think there was frame-up! Don't you? Don't you think on that basis?

[00:29:24] **GUS:** Sounds like it.

[00:29:26] **HOWARD:** Was there any—how did the union relate to the killing of this guy? Did they try to hold a ceremony or anything like that?

[00:29:32] **FRED:** We just—didn't do anything in particular, or demonstrations that I recall, because at that particular time there was two guys that got killed down in San Francisco by the national guard and they celebrate that every year—

[00:29:45] **HOWARD:** Bloody Thursday, yeah.

[00:29:47] **GUS:** Yeah, and one more in Seattle—a sailor was killed down there in '24.

[00:29:52] **FRED:** I don't recall that very distinctly.

[00:29:54] **HOWARD:** A sailor? So that's interesting, because if you read the history of the West Coast '34 strike, everyone talks about the two guys that were killed in San Francisco—it turns out there were two killed in Los Angeles [California] ? Two killed in Seattle?

[00:30:07] **FRED:** And one in Portland.

[00:30:08] **HOWARD:** And one in Portland.

[00:30:10] **FRED:** Why don't you—have you heard the story of [Joseph P.] Ryan [former ILA president] coming here on the West Coast? He came up to Seattle?

[00:30:15] **HOWARD:** Why don't you tell me more about that.

[00:30:16] **FRED:** Okay. Now we had a hall, we had a building there in Western Ave and Lenore Street where our union the union was, we had a—

[END PART ONE/BEGIN PART TWO]

[00:30:30] **HOWARD:** Okay, you may continue.

[00:30:31] **FRED:** Okay, anyway so [Joseph P.] Ryan came down to San Francisco and he negotiated a contract with the ILA, see, from the East Coast. He was one of them big bosses back there. And he came up to San Francisco, and you know, the night before he came down to see us. We met at an old garage down there is what we did in Western Avenue.

He had stayed at the Washington Athletic Club, he came down with his fingernail all manicured and the big moustache and dressed like a real affluent man. And he started ordering us back. And you know what they told him? He said, "You go back to New York. You can stay there. We're not going to go along with you at all." And that's the reason we got him out of there. The guys got up and come back and told them, Ryan—and I was right there in that garage.

But you know our job with squad I belonged to in the waterfront in those days, there was a crazy guy, there was the head guy, he was a nut. But however, and our job was—one part of our job was to meet the freight trains. And we get these guys and get them out of the freight trains and we got a strike on up on here. Come on up and we'll give you a feed and keep going. That was our strategies, one of our strategies.

[00:31:35] **HOWARD:** Did it work?

[00:31:36] **FRED:** It worked fine.

[00:31:37] **HOWARD:** Did it really?

[00:31:37] **FRED:** Some of the guys stayed too. I don't know—they claim [inaudible] _____ boy was one, but I don't know.

[00:31:43] **HOWARD:** Where were the scabs being recruited from? Or who were they? Do you remember anything about that?

[00:31:47] **FRED:** In '34?

[00:31:48] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[00:31:48] **FRED:** Well, I remember taking a gun away from a guy out there in Fifteen West [Fifteenth Avenue West] and Galer [Street]. There was a cop by me and he said, "See that guy?" He said, "He was working in there." So my squad, and I told them and we went over to talk this guy, and I told the sailors pickets that I'm going to talk to this guy. And so I went up and stopped him, and I got closer in case he pulled a gun, you see?

But I grabbed him that was my strategy. Well I talked to him again, and he was so damn nervous, you could see his heart beating in his jugular vein. So we set him down and took the gun away from him and took him down to our headquarters. And fed him and told him to keep on going—his father was a Teamster in Spokane [Washington] .

But that night the guy who was in charge of my squad was getting drunk, and he was up trying to peddle the gun. Gus could verify that! That guy was a nut. He would've never been allowed in the ILWU afterwards. And well that was some of the incidents that happened during that time.

[00:32:44] **HOWARD:** How significant was the violence in the '34 strike? In other words, let me explain why I'm asking this. I'm wondering if the violent struggle that these men had gone through sort of welded them together as '34 men? What is it about the '34 men that allows them to have a sense of identity, do you know? That they feel they're a part of a group?

[00:33:03] **FRED:** Well, I think in the first place, they were good union men to start with, otherwise they never would've had that conflicts. And the second place was there was harassment, and they got an education more or less by contact—and I don't think those guys read a hell of a lot. But, for instance, they went and threw gas at us out in there in Pier 91. We got some clubs—have you seen those clubs they used here?

[00:33:25] **HOWARD:** No, I haven't seen them, no.

[00:33:25] **FRED:** The clubs the cops used to use.

[00:33:28] **HOWARD:** You were tear gassed?

[00:33:30] **FRED:** I wasn't tear gassed.

[00:33:31] **HOWARD:** But some men were?

[00:33:32] **FRED:** I didn't—let's see where the hell I was? I was on my way out there when the attack happened. After the gas.

[00:33:40] **HOWARD:** How many of the men were gassed? Do you have any idea?

[00:33:42] **FRED:** Oh it was a quite a number of them, I couldn't tell you.

[00:33:43] **HOWARD:** Couple a hundred or so?

[00:33:44] **FRED:** Oh I don't—I suppose it was. Do you know the thing that helped us out during that strike was the people in the WPA. Worker's-People's Alliance. [sic, Workers Alliance of America] They were the people that really helped us during that strike. They were mass pickets, and there were 90 percent of the people—they were workers! They were on relief.

[00:34:05] **HOWARD:** Now—what did you call it?

[00:34:08] **FRED:** WPA.

[00:34:08] **HOWARD:** Not the Work Project Administration?

[00:34:09] **FRED:** That's what it was, they were organized too you know.

[00:34:12] **HOWARD:** That's a federal project.

[00:34:13] **FRED:** That's right.

[00:34:14] **GUS:** Worker's Alliance.

[00:34:15] **FRED:** Worker's Alliance.

[00:34:16] **HOWARD:** Yeah, that's different.

[00:34:17] **GUS:** Yeah, they were organized. These people—

[00:34:18] **FRED:** They were project of the WPA but they were belonged to the Worker's Alliance. They were organized.

[00:34:23] **HOWARD:** Who was behind the Worker's Alliance politically? What organization was it? Communist Party?

[00:34:26] **FRED:** Well, I couldn't tell you that but I recall one guy when I was chairman of the Maritime Federation up here. We had a delegate that he come from the Worker's Alliance. He was [inaudible] _____ but was active for the [?'sinks?'] afterwards, he was delegate as a first-aid man.

[00:34:41] **GUS:** People who were organized in the Worker's Alliance began with the socialists. And the socialists and the communists had separate unemployed organizations. But they worked very closely together. And I think eventually that they coalesced. But the socialists played a terrific and constructive, progressive role in the forming of the Worker's Alliance and in the leading of it. They were very good people. And I don't know if you're familiar with the history of a—recent history of American Labor in the U.S. by that team of Soviet historians and economists?

[00:35:26] **HOWARD:** Oh, I haven't seen it, but I've heard of it.

[00:35:29] **GUS:** That's a two volume set. And it's very interesting the way they trace and tell the history of those people. They give more credit to the socialists on that particular thing than the communists.

[00:35:44] **HOWARD:** Now was the Worker's Alliance just in Seattle? Or was it a national?

[00:35:47] **GUS:** National set-up. It started in the East Coast and spread here. I knew several—I was the delegate for the Central Labor Council from Pulp and Sulphite [International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite, and Paper Mill Workers Union] and the Worker's Alliance had delegates there. It played a terrific role. Outstanding people. And solidly behind the labor movement and were very active in preventing unemployed workers from scabbing.

[00:36:13] **HOWARD:** How many people were mobilized by them? Do you have any idea during the '34 strike?

[00:36:17] **FRED:** You mean the WPA?

[00:36:17] **HOWARD:** Yeah. You said that they brought down a lot of people.

[00:36:20] **FRED:** The picket line out there was a massive picket. There were mass pickets!

[00:36:24] **HOWARD:** How many would you estimate?

[00:36:25] **FRED:** Well I'd imagine thousands. At least.

[00:36:28] **HOWARD:** At least 2,000?

[00:36:29] **FRED:** One thousand, I'd say. There was a lot of people. Thousands. You couldn't move, they were packed in there like sardines.

[00:36:35] **HOWARD:** And this was where? In front of the docks or something?

[00:36:36] **FRED:** In front of the docks. Right there in front, across the railroad tracks, there were [inaudible] _____.

[00:36:43] **GUS:** That's before my time.

[00:36:44] **HOWARD:** Were there any other big demonstrations during the '34 strike that you can think of? Of a symbolic nature or whatever—rallies? Probably were, but—

[00:36:55] **FRED:** Well, there was no rallies that I can recall. Only the stories in here about the [column?] guests. What do they call him? [Charles L.] Smith. He was the mayor and I happened to go to school with his wife. His brother-in-law was in my squad in the army. But "Gas 'Em Up" Smith, they called him. He was the quarterback for the University of Washington.

[00:37:19] **HOWARD:** What about the role of the Teamsters here in Seattle during the '34 strike? This was [Dave] Beck's stronghold—how did they respond?

[00:37:26] **FRED:** Well, I couldn't tell you—I don't think they responded very much because Dave Beck was in leadership I believe. He takes a lot of credit for those things, you know.

[00:37:36] **HOWARD:** Didn't he do an embargo on cargo or something like that?

[00:37:38] **FRED:** No. Never heard of that.

[00:37:39] **HOWARD:** Never heard of that?

[00:37:39] **FRED:** What they did a few years later there, Beck decided he was going to take everything on wheels over and make Teamsters out of everything. We had an operation down in Pier 14, you must remember that one. Pier 14—Pier 72 now, it's where that Edgewater Hotel is now and we had an operation come where these—they bring a boom near from the South Pacific in the Blue Funnel Line, which is an English line. Well we had these four-wheelers, you know, things about this long and this and we'd haul across the tracks with the jitneys and they'd process this stuff. And he decided that he was going to take this operation over.

So one morning, it was a Saturday, him and his goon squad were going to go down and we had about 500 longshoremen round up that goon squad and that's the last we heard of them.

[00:38:23] **GUS:** What sort of an organization did the Teamsters have in '34? I thought the longshoremen, beginning at that time, played a big role in helping to organize the Teamsters?

[00:38:39] **FRED:** No, we were fighting the Teamsters at that time because—

[00:38:42] **GUS:** In '34?

[00:38:42] **FRED:** Well, right after '34. We were fighting them. Because remember that Sears Roebuck beef we had down there? When we were organizing down there, and they shot [?Herb Goodman?] ! The guy who's goes down to—

[00:38:52] **GUS:** That was later.

[00:38:53] **FRED:** That was two years later.

[00:38:54] **HOWARD:** Teamsters I think, were pretty strong by '34.

[00:38:56] **GUS:** Were they?

[00:38:57] **HOWARD:** I think so, yeah.

[00:38:58] **FRED:** They were fairly strong, and years after that.

[00:38:59] **GUS:** Down in Everett?

[00:39:00] **HOWARD:** I don't know about Everett, but in Seattle.

[00:39:01] **GUS:** Seattle?

[00:39:01] **HOWARD:** Seattle, yeah.

[00:39:02] **FRED:** And they got so mad at us, the leaders of the Teamsters Union wouldn't allow their—

[00:39:06] **HOWARD:** They were one of the largest unions in the city.

[00:39:07] **FRED:** Yeah. They wouldn't allow their people to work on the waterfront! And they had a hiring hall down there in the waterfront. And I remember seeing a guy that worked extra. And by god, he'd go down and he couldn't go to work. And if there's no work, the Teamsters would do the work down in the waterfront and he couldn't do the work down there!

[00:39:24] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a couple questions also, about the role of political groups during the '34 strike. There was the Marine Workers Industrial Union, which was close to the Communist Party—do you remember them at all?

[00:39:34] **FRED:** I remember something about them in San Francisco, but not much in Seattle.

[00:39:37] **HOWARD:** Not too much of them here, huh?

[00:39:38] **FRED:** Not in Seattle that I recall.

[00:39:39] **HOWARD:** No recollection whatsoever?

[00:39:40] **FRED:** Not a bit.

[00:39:41] **HOWARD:** Okay, so if they were here—

[00:39:43] **FRED:** We had several guys here that were real wild guys.

[00:39:46] **GUS:** He backed me up on the statement that the Teamsters had nothing here and even said that also, [inaudible] _____ and Rosco [Craycraft] , we the longshoremens, we helped them organize.

[00:40:00] **HOWARD:** Oh. I haven't heard that before. That's interesting.

[00:40:01] **FRED:** Yeah, in 19—later on when we were organizing the Sears and Roebuck they contacted us and they shot a guy—he's coming here this afternoon.

[00:40:14] **HOWARD:** You said that the Marine Workers Industrial Union was not very significant here?

[00:40:17] **FRED:** Not very strong, yeah I don't recall a whole lot about them at all.

[00:40:20] **HOWARD:** How about sort of, independent, radical—

[00:40:22] **FRED:** That was not in Seattle, that was in San Francisco. That's where they were more powerful down there. But I—they had a blue book, they called it, down there.

[00:40:28] **HOWARD:** Blue book union?

[00:40:30] **FRED:** Yeah. You know in the '34 strike they took all the books and put them in a pile and burned them, I recall. But we didn't have—they were better organized than they were down there and we were up here, I believe. On the second thought, looking through my mind.

[00:40:43] **HOWARD:** Yeah. Were there any political groups that were handing out literature during the strike? Or offering interpretations? That you can remember?

[00:40:53] **FRED:** No.

[00:40:54] **HOWARD:** Many individuals in the union trying to—?

[00:40:56] **FRED:** Oh yes. We had a lot of individuals. We had guys here that when the war came along, they couldn't get within a mile of the waterfront!

[00:41:02] **HOWARD:** Because of?

[00:41:03] **FRED:** [?Henry Guerig?] was one of them! Do you remember him?

[00:41:05] **GUS:** Who?

[00:41:05] **FRED:** [?Henry Guerig?] He was German. He was a Wobbly, a real Wobbly. He was a German. He couldn't get on the waterfront.

[00:41:14] **HOWARD:** [to external person] Oh we're doing a little interviewing here, are you going to be vacuuming?

[00:41:17] **OUTSIDE VOICE:** When you're done.

[00:41:18] **HOWARD:** Okay, it's likely to be another hour or more.

[00:41:22] **OUTSIDE VOICE:** All right.

[00:41:26] **HOWARD:** Unless we can go somewhere else? I don't know where—

[00:41:28] **FRED:** Well, it's the best place. You got in the other room people coming and going all the time.

[00:41:33] **HOWARD:** Yeah, you're right.

[00:41:33] **FRED:** And they'd be changing shifts here at noon. Oh, we'll speed it up.

[00:41:39] **OUTSIDE VOICE:** You get Fred to talk a little faster.

[00:41:43] **FRED:** Well, I got a little help here. Gus is doing a good job.

[00:41:45] **OUTSIDE VOICE:** [inaudible] ____.

[00:41:47] **FRED:** Well, I had a lot of problems on this waterfront. When I was chairman of the Maritime Federation, we had a strike with the canned salmon industry.

[00:41:59] **HOWARD:** Before we get there let me ask you a few more questions about '34 if I can, because I think that's—let me ask you a big question. What was the '34 strike—what did it mean to you? Was it simply just a union struggle or was it something more?

[00:42:10] **FRED:** It was a union struggle, basically.

[00:42:13] **HOWARD:** Had no wider significance to you?

[00:42:15] **FRED:** Well there was a lot of sides to this thing, of course. The basic common concept of better wages and better work. Our basis of conception and all negotiations is better working conditions! Not that—we're not too interested in the money. Basically. You know, we like the money, but our fundamental union concept is working conditions. If you don't have working conditions you've got nothing. That right? [addressing Gus]

[00:42:37] **GUS:** What was the basic demand in the '34 strike—as far as the longshoremen were concerned—

[00:42:44] **FRED:** Or I think one of the basic demands was the recognizing of the union! Another one was the hiring hall. That was the one—I was on the hiring hall and I remember when they moved and I working under the union hall after '34. I never worked out the fink hall.

[00:42:57] **HOWARD:** Do you think that was sort of a radical demand? In those days? Control for hiring?

[00:43:02] **FRED:** Well they said so, we didn't say so.

[00:43:04] **HOWARD:** You didn't think it was?

[00:43:05] **FRED:** No! No we thought it was move forward is all, that's all we had the idea that I did. You might call me a radical, you as a conservative would call me a radical! But that was what we're looking at for the future. See? Now I'll tell you how they moved out of that fink hall. On the guy, there was a charter in my squad that was a lead-off man. They had piano down there. And we were operating out of our hall—we had a hall in front of Pike Street. But they had a big kind of a big mass of demonstration down there in the fink hall

and the tipped the pianos over there, and tipped the piano, and walked right up en masse. They walked right up en masse up to our hiring hall and that was it! [?Bob Cameron?] was that guy's name.

[00:43:47] **GUS:** Going back to the Hiring Hall, I remember having read this statement made by Harry Bridges directed to the—probably the Secretary of Labor—?

[00:44:02] **HOWARD:** Perkins?

[00:44:03] **FRED:** No it was after him—her. Before her.

[00:44:06] **HOWARD:** Before her?

[00:44:07] **GUS:** Anyway, at the time he directed this letter statement, where he pointed out that in longshore, without a hiring hall, there's no union. Because we finish our jobs, work only three or four days, two weeks—and the job is finished. And unless we have hiring hall and see to it that there's a fair division of labor amongst the guys, the employers would be in a position to blacklist anybody they didn't like. And without the hiring hall there can be no fairness in the division of labor available, the work available. And therefore, the hiring hall is absolutely essential in order to have a union. That is the union.

[00:45:04] **HOWARD:** Yeah, okay.

[00:45:06] **GUS:** This is one that has been—that is something that after the '34, the hiring hall, as far as the workers were concerned was not negotiable.

[00:45:17] **FRED:** That was the biggest thing we've ever had.

[00:45:19] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you question about after '34, when you came back to the waterfront. Had working conditions changed and if so how?

[00:45:27] **FRED:** Not much.

[00:45:28] **HOWARD:** Not much?

[00:45:28] **FRED:** No. The problem we had after that from that I recall from the top of my head, was these gang—guys that had gangs. They were stooges of these head guy down at the fink hall. The fact of the matter is, he was very active in the Elks Club [Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks] —what the heck was the name? God, he turned out to be pretty fair guy after I was negotiating with him on the labor relations; we could twist him around our thumbs, you know. But he was the Exalted Ruler at the Elks Club in Ballard. And all these deck men and these guys in charge of the gangs joined, they were all Elks. And when we got this '34 thing, they still had gangs and they were there, they had—they run the gangs. They were the bull of the woods [reference to a logging term for a foreman or supervisor] . They run the show. Jump! You know, they had to produce in those days.

Hatch tenders—what are they called again? The hatch tenders, is he? He owned the gang. [?Frank Williams?] I remember one of them. I remember I had punched him in the whiskers one time when he came down in the hold. We were discharging one of the steam schooners. You know what a steam schooner is? They don't exist anymore. And we're breaking down on the sugar in the square of the hatch. Laying our boards down so we could drop the sacks down and he came down to hurry the work. And I said, “Look, fellow, you should stay on the deck where you belong.”

I mean I could see his arm swaying from behind, and I hit him on the button, I gave him the Liverpool kiss [a head butt] to finish it off quick as I could, because I thought that we'd be struggling around, and I'd break a leg in the contling, they call it, between the sacks. And he says—well I said, "Go up on deck and I'll meet you at noon." And he never showed up. He said to me, "What are you going to do put the boots to me?" And I said, "No, you big, fat tub of crap," I said, "Go up on the deck and I'll meet you." He was a boss of stooges you see. So that was some of the incidents.

[00:47:16] **HOWARD:** Didn't the men feel like they could stand up for themselves a little more after '34?

[00:47:19] **FRED:** Oh yes, without a doubt. Oh yes. They began—

[00:47:22] **HOWARD:** So there was that kind of a change?

[00:47:23] **FRED:** Oh yes, there was that kind of change. It became more militant. If we ever talked back to these guys we would get fired.

[00:47:28] **HOWARD:** Do you remember any specific instances that took place that you were involved in?

[00:47:32] **FRED:** That incident that I told you.

[00:47:33] **HOWARD:** That one there?

[00:47:33] **FRED:** I had two-three incidents when I went down there on the job over the same thing.

[00:47:38] **HOWARD:** Did you ever engage in any work stoppages?

[00:47:39] **FRED:** Yes, indeed.

[00:47:39] **HOWARD:** After '34? Do you want to describe those a little bit?

Well, we had what we called a slow-down you give the stuff that kind of—hello Ray! [to outside person]

RAY, PASSING THROUGH THE ROOM: Hello, hello!

[00:47:52] **FRED:** We had the Taft-Hartley Act, where we had that cooling off period that I recall.

[00:47:56] **HOWARD:** That was much later.

[00:47:58] **FRED:** Must've been '36 or '37.

[00:47:58] **HOWARD:** It was '47.

[00:47:59] **FRED:** Was it '47?

[00:48:01] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[00:48:03] **FRED:** We had—to establish certain work conditions, we'd give them a slowdown period and they'd fire the guys, only some of the guys, the same guys got back in the same job. Remember? We had a lot of strategy we used on that.

[00:48:16] **HOWARD:** Do you remember what some of the beef the men had were? After the '34? Sling loads?

[00:48:22] **FRED:** That was one of the main things was the sling loads.

[00:48:26] **HOWARD:** Gang size?

[00:48:26] **FRED:** Well, I don't know about some of the gangs, that was beyond our strategy, and there's the rank-of-file of the local would be determined more or less by the international. But the other stuff, the slow downs, you know, these guys, these bosses would try to drive the men! You see, that was the problem there. Of course slave driving. They wanted to produce. Produce! They're still that way, I guess, I don't know. But that was one of our arguments, we had to slow these guys down.

[00:48:54] **GUS:** I remember hearing the old timers talk when I started that the conditions and the attitude of the men, before that they were striking afterwards, was just like night-and-day.

[00:49:12] **FRED:** After what? Because it gave a little while to establish—

[00:49:14] **HOWARD:** Why don't you explain that a little bit?

[00:49:17] **GUS:** Well, before, a foreman could fire a guy and the foreman picked the guys for the next ship. And if a worker, from the foreman's point of view, was too militant, well, he just sat in the hall.

[00:49:39] **FRED:** Fired him and that was it.

[00:49:40] **GUS:** Yeah, he fired him and he sat there. After '34, he could fire the guy, even if he fired him for a cause. The union hall just sent that guy right back again. And most of the time, the foreman would fire them in order to speed them up. And therefore, the union dispatch sent the same guy back again to the same foreman, after '34.

[00:50:08] **HOWARD:** Yeah, and obviously made the men feel like it's the end.

[00:50:10] **FRED:** Took them a long time to get where he is now!

[00:50:11] **GUS:** Now they had power, before they didn't have any. They had collective protection. They had no protection before.

[00:50:17] **FRED:** They had security. They had a committee to defend them.

I recall, you know it took a long time for conditions to change, if I recall, you know I never put much thought in this stuff, you know—

[00:50:26] **GUS:** But don't you think that—

[00:50:28] **FRED:** That's true.

[00:50:29] **GUS:** Yeah, and you came—you had been away for some time, so you were not quite as aware of that change as the people who'd been working there all the time.

[00:50:38] **FRED:** Well, I'll tell you think, I had two brothers working on the beach, I kept in contact with them guys. But I recall, we used to have seven 'o clock starts in the morning and we'd have a half of an hour for lunch. Anyway, we'd work till five o'clock or six o'clock and we'd go till dinner and come back and work till eleven and come back the next morning at seven. And some of them shifts, they worked around the clock! Finished the job, they'd be dropping dead in their feet on the Alaska Steam [Alaska Steamship Company] .

[OUTSIDE CONVERSATION]

[00:51:10] **GUS:** And all of that was gone. In fact, after '34, they had the six-hour day.

[00:51:22] **HOWARD:** Yeah, right.

Let me ask you a question about—

[00:51:25] **GUS:** Which turned into a phony.

[00:51:27] **HOWARD:** Yeah, well, I mean it worked to your advantage though, right?

[00:51:31] **FRED:** Didn't work to our advantage because these guys didn't go for the six-hour day.

[00:51:34] **HOWARD:** You worked an eight- or ten-hour day and it was overtime after six.

[00:51:37] **GUS:** At first, they tried to establish the six-hour day, that was the idea behind it.

[00:51:42] **HOWARD:** Oh I see, yeah.

[00:51:45] **GUS:** And after six hours, it was overtime. Now, as time went on, you couldn't even make a living working only six hours. So they bribed the people to work past the eight—six hours, even eight and ten hours.

[00:52:02] **FRED:** Fourteen hours.

[00:52:03] **GUS:** Yeah I don't think they had more than a ten-hour day, unless the ship was sailing after '34. I can speak for myself.

[00:52:16] **FRED:** I can't recall that's not incidental but it lived in precedent to much—and many things were happening then.

[00:52:22] **GUS:** Yeah as time—

[00:52:22] **FRED:** But I still think we were—had the work come back after we sailed, or finished the ship off—come back the next morning at seven o'clock. That was [inaudible] _____ seven in the morning and eleven at night, and then come back and do the same job. That's a long day!

[00:52:37] **GUS:** When I came back and started working on the waterfront in '34, we had the 10-hour day.

[00:52:41] **FRED:** So you came back a long time after I did—eight years or ten years, after the '34 strike.

[00:52:46] **HOWARD:** In the middle of the war, yeah.

[00:52:49] **GUS:** And we didn't get the eight-hour day until '48. Now at that time, Harry—even in the '46—Bridges recommended an eight-hour day without overtime. And he was voted down by the membership. If we had gotten that at that time, we would have been in a much better position because now, in order to make a living, you had to work at least eight hours and in the contract they had the six-hour day. The employers, if they got people they didn't care too much about, they worked them six hours on the dock and sent them home. The people that they liked, they worked them till eight hours.

[00:53:36] **FRED:** That's true.

[00:53:37] **GUS:** And therefore, in order to make a living, the ones who got a week with only six hours a day had to work the weekend in order to make a living. So for a long time, that six-hour worked against them.

[00:53:50] **HOWARD:** I see, I never heard that.

[00:53:52] **FRED:** That's true. That's true. Some of them ships like the one that used to go north every year for the Indian Affairs, there they worked six hours and then they couldn't get men to get the job. They worked maybe a week, but they only worked six hours a day. Then on the dock they did the same thing. They'd [?send?] the cargo and they had a heck of a time getting them.

[00:54:11] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you about the '36, '37 period, do you remember any incidents about scrap iron boycotts or protests in Seattle?

[00:54:20] **FRED:** I do.

[00:54:21] **HOWARD:** What do remember about that?

[00:54:22] **FRED:** Well there was a load of scrap iron up here, in '41 and they were all kinds of funny ships coming in here, you know that mixed crew, and all kinds of nationalities and they—the captain of the ship had his wife on some ships. They were rust buckets was what we called them. And you loaded all that scrap iron by magnets. So then we tied that up, you know, we—they had a picket line out there, the Chinese put a picket line—no the Jap—no the Chinese.

[00:54:49] **HOWARD:** It was probably Japanese.

[00:54:50] **FRED:** No, it was Chinese, because we were shipping them to Japan.

[00:54:58] **HOWARD:** That was in '41 though, huh?

[00:55:00] **FRED:** I don't remember what period.

[00:55:00] **HOWARD:** Or around that period?

[00:55:02] **FRED:** I don't remember. Before '41, because the war was a declared by '37, '38, '39.

[00:55:10] **HOWARD:** That's when the international launched their sort of like boycott in '38.

[00:55:13] **FRED:** Well, we used to write back, you know, tell them—or basic argument was against shipping the scrap iron to Japan was that they're going to shoot us back to form the shells! What are they going to do? They got the proper communist propaganda going back in the East, and they said, "You're all communists in the West Coast!" The farmers were collecting all the scrap iron and selling it, you know, they were making money hand over fist!

[00:55:35] **HOWARD:** Oh, is that right?

[00:55:36] **FRED:** Oh yes! We had that Chinese picket line down there that we observed the picket line, we wouldn't go through it.

[00:55:41] **HOWARD:** Were the longshoremen pretty much in sympathy the picketing and everything?

[00:55:44] **FRED:** Oh my god, yes. Yes, we said, you know, we said we were against the shipping stuff over there because they're going to ship it back in shells to us—that was our argument. And they said, we're all communists over here!

[00:55:54] **GUS:** I remember in Everett I worked at the pulp mill at the time. The Chinese put up a picket line, they were boycotting scrap iron, the longshoremen refused to go through the picket line. The employers called in the arbitrator, Matt Meehan came up—

[00:56:10] **FRED:** I think Matt was a secretary at the time.

[00:56:11] **GUS:** Secretary of the—International Secretary at that time, wasn't he?

[00:56:18] **FRED:** Well, I was chair about that time.

[00:56:20] **GUS:** Well, anyway he came and he represented the ILWU and he ruled that it was a legitimate picket line and the longshoremen did not go to work.

[00:56:31] **HOWARD:** And was anyone penalized for that?

[00:56:33] **BOTH:** No.

[00:56:33] **HOWARD:** Because in Los Angeles they did penalize like 52 guys. They played real hard on that, they took them to court and they tried to get 52 people fired during that. Then the union cleverly brought them back into the workforce, rotating them in. You know, in various jobs. So, I didn't know there was any scrap iron incident here in the Northwest. That's interesting.

[00:56:53] **FRED:** We have lot of comments, you know sending them back and we tell them, We're not shipping over, they'd come back in the form of shells! That was our basic argument.

[00:57:03] **HOWARD:** Was there sort of an anti-fascist appeal, or was that not so strong?

[00:57:08] **FRED:** I don't remember the word fascism coming into the picture at that time.

[00:57:12] **HOWARD:** Because that was prominent in San Francisco in local 10, they portrayed it as an anti-fascist struggle.

[00:57:17] **FRED:** I don't remember that. We were just interested in—the fact of the argument and this scrap iron would be if we could see the handwriting up the wall. The fact of the matter is we had a boycott on all the goods manufacturing in Japan. I remember my wife, she goes shopping for stuff, and if anything was made in Japan she wouldn't buy it. Remember that? We had a boycott on all that—

[00:57:38] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you an ignorant question, why weren't you boycotting German goods at the same time? Or they just weren't coming in or what?

[00:57:44] **FRED:** German goods at that time, that was before the war! And we weren't too cognizant into what—because we had an ambassador called [Joseph P.] Kennedy over there in London. And I met him when he was over here, he came to settle the strike. We got him drunk down in San Francisco. Nice old guy.

You know, I tell you a little incident that was happening. He was talking in our meeting one time and we had a beef with the Canadian ships and he was out here as Chairman of the Maritime Commission. They used—FDR

used him as a mediator. And he's up addressing our meeting, you know, we had a little table where in the rostrum there's about that high and they had a hand mic that's got his ass parked at the end of the table. And he started swearing. And some longshoremen said, "Mr. Chairman I wish you asked Mr. Kennedy cut out that swearing!" And he said, "We're not used to that kind of language in our meetings!" [laughs]

So anyway, we met with him in the Olympic—hello Arnold!

We met him up in the Olympic Hotel and he met Harry Bridges for the first time. About that time Kennedy got a Portland ambassador to change in the James Street court, you see. So he said, "I'm glad to know you Harry. Bridges, I understand you [?were a runaway?] ." To Bridges.

You know what Bridges said to him, he said, "Look"—what the hell was his first name? It was Joe! He said, "Joe, how's it going to feel as you go back to James Street court to wear them short knee pants in the wing?"

But he turned out to be a fascist and he was great friend of Hitler, you see, under the protest over there. So, well he was a nice, little guy, we've got the picture where he's someplace sitting on the table with a mic—go ahead.

[00:59:31] **GUS:** Well, the progressive I remember back in—I was very active in the progressive movement way back then. And you know, in the labor union, you have sprinkling, only you may say, of people trying to learn as much as they can. Trying to be as active as possible. And we were all very much aware of fascism in Germany and we were all struggling against it. We had similar outfits here, the silver shirts and the different outfits. And the Ku Klux Klan was also active and so forth. So we were very much active and in San Francisco we got very good leadership on those things from the top leadership in ILWU, from Harry Bridges in particular. But we had also the hard workers from the top leadership who worked very closely with Henry Schmidt and Bulcke and all the rest of them, [inaudible] _____. At the time, one of the reasons I believe, for the strength of the ILWU was first that we had a close teamwork at the top and very good solid support of similar people down in the local.

[01:00:48] **HOWARD:** Like secondary leaders or something?

[01:00:49] **GUS:** Secondary leaders.

[END PART TWO/BEGIN PART THREE]

[01:00:58] **FRED:** "I want you to go out," he said, "and tell them guys to do so-and-so, it's an order from the head guy." And Bridges says, "I can't tell my men—and they tell me what to do!" That was the basis of kicking us out of the CIO on the camouflaged deal of saying "you're a communist." And you see, [?Morrey?] was a very devout Roman Catholic and that's why he was anti-communist.

[01:01:20] **HOWARD:** Were the communists very active in the Local 19? During the late-30s?

[01:01:25] **FRED:** I think so. I mean I knew all my friends were all—

[01:01:29] **HOWARD:** Let me go off the record for a second.

[PAUSE IN RECORDING OF THE INTERVIEW]

Okay, so tell me that again, about relationship of the rank-and-file to the Marxist philosophy.

[01:01:36] **GUS:** Well, okay I think that in our union, our unit, the ILWU from '34 on had a Marxist leadership. Not that they were members of the Communist Party and that's the important thing. Harry himself said that "In most the things they accused me of, they were right. But they lied and they said I was a member of the Communist Party. And I wasn't." And that's why they didn't get him, couldn't get him.

[01:02:07] **HOWARD:** But you saw that he was a Marxist, right?

[01:02:09] **FRED:** In theory.

[01:02:10] **HOWARD:** Do you think the rank-and-filers saw him as a Marxist?

[01:02:13] **FRED:** No.

[01:02:14] **HOWARD:** What did they see him as?

[01:02:15] **FRED:** Well the thing is, it was divided. Some guys said that he was a goddamn communist. Now for example, I'll tell you, this is the rank-and file, yes. Not my people but I'm talking about the trends, like [?Georgie Orr?] and [?Joe Mysol?]. I knew all of them guys, you see. They had Bridges as a communist.

[01:02:33] **GUS:** Yes.

[01:02:33] **FRED:** All these guys, I can put the finger on all of them because I was right in there.

[01:02:36] **HOWARD:** So, they accused him of being a communist?

[01:02:38] **FRED:** Yeah—but they had no proof, now. I'll tell you what I experienced last Sunday, I am the commander of the Veteran for Foreign Wars, you see.

[01:02:45] **HOWARD:** You are?

[01:02:46] **FRED:** Yes. And I'm also a Quartermaster of the World War I Veterans. But anyway down there they have a deal for competition for the Voice of Democracy and all that kind of junk—for the young kids. So they had a presentation of some certificates out there. And across the way from me was a guy who sat down, was a civilian. [inaudible] _____. He probably was veteran. And he was the head of the history department at the Ballard High School. And the conversation led on one to another, you know, we're on the record here.

And so, Harry Bridges name had come into the picture, see. And all of sudden that guy said that, "Oh he was a damn communist and he was no-good." And I said, "What the hell are you talking about fellow?" I said, "I happen to know Harry Bridges, personally. He was a friend a mine." When I got through with that guy, I made a Christian out of him. [laughs] I converted him right there! And he said, "You told me things I never heard of." Well I says, "Well that's the capitalistic propaganda press you're reading." I said, "Go to the library and get the [?trial to the end, Wayne Morrison for three weeks?] . Read that stuff about Harry Bridges. Read some of the comments that [?Judge?] Douglas wrote about Harry Bridges. Where he says man's intolerance to man. There's a quotation here that I'll just read about here, something here—oh what the heck, I'll find it here—anyway—

[01:04:03] **HOWARD:** Now, I think it's true that Bridges wasn't a communist and wasn't a member of the Party.

[01:04:06] **FRED:** No! He wasn't a member of the Party. But he told them in the—

[01:04:09] **HOWARD:** But if the rank-and-file perceived him as such that's significant.

[01:04:12] **FRED:** That's propaganda, you see!

[01:04:13] **HOWARD:** Now you want to—Gus wants to respond to that.

[01:04:14] **FRED:** I was going to say something, but I'll strike it.

[01:04:17] **HOWARD:** Okay, Gus, what's your position on this?

[01:04:19] **GUS:** Yeah the, Harry, many times, publicly, he had stated several times that he was a Marxist. And that's no secret.

[01:04:31] **FRED:** I believe that, yeah.

[01:04:34] **GUS:** Australia, the Australian Labor Movement was pro-socialist. And Harry came right out, always, openly said that he believed in socialism. But he also said that he was not a member of the Communist Party. The rank-and-file believed that. It was true and the rank-and-file accepted that.

[01:05:01] **HOWARD:** [inaudible] _____ didn't red-bait him?

[01:05:03] **FRED:** Oh! What are you talking about?

[01:05:05] **GUS:** The rank-and-file accepted it. The rank-and-file did not think he was a member of the Communist Party.

[01:05:12] **FRED:** We backed him up 100 percent.

[01:05:13] **GUS:** Now, all what he called—well the anti-Bridges forces inside the union and outside—all called him a Communist and red-baited him. Constantly. And that it influenced some of the feeling and thinking of the rank-and file, there's no question about it. But the rank-and-file always overwhelmingly supported Harry Bridges. And nobody, for a long time, wouldn't even tried to run against him because they had no chance. They had tried it on more than one occasion. But they were completely snowed under. Harry got them, a total vote-backing from the rank-and-file which proves that if he had been a member of the Communist Party, come right out, openly, and said he was a member of the Communist Party, he would have never been able to win the support like he did. They accepted the philosophy of that program and when he was on trial, he was even asked the question, "With your outlook and your point-of-view, why aren't you a member of the Communist Party?" They asked him. Harry said, "Maybe I haven't got the guts."

[01:06:24] **FRED:** Well he said that they helped us out and the trade union, he made that statement and said—here I want it quote here a little, and this thing here. Harry told us about two or three unions got expelled out. I mean two of the electric workers and the longshoremen union managed to survive as independent unions. Supreme Court Justice William H. Douglas had said in 1945, that Bridges was guilty of one sin. Militant trade unionism. That's William Douglas!

[01:06:53] **GUS:** And that's what the rank-and-file have endorsed completely.

[01:07:00] **HOWARD:** Okay, we're going to talk about this more and in-depth when we get to the '50s, but now I want to talk about the war, when you entered the union and everything else. Were you on the waterfront during the war?

[01:07:08] **FRED:** Yeah.

[01:07:08] **HOWARD:** You were too?

[01:07:09] **FRED:** World War II that you're talking about?

[01:07:10] **HOWARD:** Yeah, right. Did the working conditions change in the early parts of the war? Was there a speed-up practiced or anything like that?

[01:07:19] **FRED:** No. We were still working long days. There was an act called the Little Steel Act that they put into effect during that war which limited the wages to five and seven-and-a-half percent raise. That's all we ever got. We were working the long hours and the FBI had me down there three or four times. There was no case of sabotage in the West Coast during that time. We had to turn in some of those guys who were trying to do it, I was at the Labor Relations Boards and we had to fine a gang one time, a whole night's pay. They was sabotaging on the war effort up in Everett.

[01:07:49] **HOWARD:** What do you mean by sabotage?

[01:07:51] **FRED:** Well, they were raising hell about the guards—the Navy guards on the ships and things like that. So they'd slow down. They didn't want these guards down there. And these guys we found out, we're coming up in Chicago. In two weeks I was in a clearance committee we shipped them back and get them the hell out of here and understand that we can't work for 30 days. We were for the war. We wanted to beat Hitler. And there was no case of sabotage on the West Coast.

[01:08:16] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a question about that because during the early phases of the war, Bridges came out and said, "We have to make the union an instrument of the speed-up. We have to suspend the class struggle. We have to push for productivity. We have no more hostility towards the employers—we're on the same side of the hill."

[01:08:34] **FRED:** I've never heard that.

[01:08:37] **HOWARD:** You've never heard that? This is weird. Yeah these are almost direct quotes, and what I'm trying to see is if that statement of his had any impact on the way you guys had to work.

[01:08:45] **FRED:** No, I never heard of it.

[01:08:47] **HOWARD:** You never did?

[01:08:47] **FRED:** No and I was really active in my unit, I was the Chairman of the seventeenth union.

[01:08:50] **HOWARD:** And Rosco was like on some international—he was International vice-president then.

[01:08:54] **FRED:** Yeah.

[01:08:54] **HOWARD:** And he never heard of it.

[01:08:55] **FRED:** I didn't either. That's propaganda.

[01:08:57] **HOWARD:** That's amazing. Well he might've said it but it might've not made much of an impact.

[01:08:59] **FRED:** He might've said that but there wasn't much context or something. But we produced. You know the FBI—I told the FBI—the FBI told me, one time there was general, we met, his name was [?Dennis?] . And even though he didn't know the forward end of a ship from the stern, he was a hell of a nice guy. And

during the war, when Ronald [sic, Erwin Rommel] was—had secured North Africa, if you recall during that war? And the Mediterranean was tied up? We couldn't get any ships through there. This guy told us in this committee, if you have one day of work stop, we'd lose the war. We didn't have one case of sabotage in the West Coast! We had one fire in one dock in Seattle and that was Luckenbach Dock that was called Army who were built over there.

The East Coast at that time were red-baiting us like mad back there that and that was where all the sabotage was! The ships would go out to sea and the deckloads and turnbuckle would loosen and take them in for two or three weeks to secure the loads! And I told the FBI we never had one case sabotage in the West Coast and he agreed with me, this FBI [agent] . And I said, "Do you think for a minute that we would long to destroy our place of employment? And we'd take that guy and throw him over the side?"—and that was during the war, of course—"And throw him over the side, and the first thing we'd do is hand him an anchor. Then you guys would come along and put us in jail for killing guy on [inaudible] _____ property!" And he laughs, you see.

[01:10:17] **HOWARD:** [Addressing Gus] Let me ask you the same question I just asked Fred, I was pointing out to him that during the early years of the war, just after the war began, our involvement, Bridges came out with statements like, "You have to turn your union into an instrument for the speed-up. There's no longer a class-struggle between workers and employers. We're on the same side of the fence. We all have to push for national unity." And made a whole bunch of overtures to the employers to the effect that he would suspend working conditions in the interest of raising efficiency. Now, first of all, do you remember any of those statements in—?

[01:10:52] **GUS:** No.

[01:10:53] **HOWARD:** No?

[01:10:53] **FRED:** That's right. I said the same thing.

[01:10:56] **GUS:** They are not true.

[01:10:57] **FRED:** So did Rosco, he had the same answer.

[01:11:01] **GUS:** As an example, when [U.S. President Franklin D.] Roosevelt gave out the order that all work after eight hours shall be overtime, all work after forty hours a week shall be overtime, they want you to cut down on the overtime work for the—after six hours. And also we had time-and-half for Sunday and Saturday too, at that time. And so longshoremen, instead of getting a raise, all the workers, longshoremen were taking cuts. Harry sent a telegram to the White House, or whoever it was sent to, and telling them that if you cut the wages of the longshoremen, the fight for liberty will start on the West Coast docks.

[01:11:57] **HOWARD:** Is that right? Are you sure about that?

[01:11:59] **GUS:** Absolutely.

[01:12:01] **HOWARD:** That's interesting.

[01:12:03] **GUS:** Now that contradicted the very spirit of the statements that you have made.

[01:12:09] **FRED:** Well, I don't believe what he said. I never heard of it was and Rosco never heard of it before either.

[01:12:12] **GUS:** No, it's contrary to everything our union had stood for.

[01:12:16] **FRED:** You know—

[01:12:17] **HOWARD:** Well it isn't. You know, a lot of the left-wing unions, the UE [United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America] for instance, did some incredible stuff. They introduced speed-ups in their shops during the war—remember the [Earl] Browder line? That the Communist Party was—?

[01:12:28] **GUS:** Yes.

[01:12:29] **HOWARD:** Okay, well that was implemented in a number of unions.

[01:12:31] **FRED:** He was a bad guy, Browder was, he was a sell-out.

[01:12:34] **GUS:** Harry Bridges was being undermined by those people. Now, what happened again later was the left-wing, I can name people from San Francisco [who] were very much anti-Harry. And now, at that time, they attacked Harry for being super leftist. Later, the same people attacked Harry for being a conservative. Harry's line was also of was—

[01:13:10] **HOWARD:** I talked to one of those people, I think.

[01:13:11] **GUS:** —of the interest of the working class. That was his line. Always.

[01:13:17] **HOWARD:** You're saying that there was no, sort of attempts to back off on contract protection during the war?

[01:13:22] **GUS:** Now, when we made a no-strike pledge, that pledge was to the American people and our allies abroad in our struggle to make damn sure that our soldiers would enough to fight with in order to beat Hitler.

[01:13:40] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a related question. Local 6 in San Francisco, signed an in-depth no-strike pledge in 1945. How does that square with what you're saying?

[01:13:50] **GUS:** No strike, no strike pledge—that's correct.

[01:13:53] **HOWARD:** An indefinite one? In 1945, after the end of the war?

[01:13:56] **GUS:** Oh no, no, no.

[01:13:57] **FRED:** I never heard a word about that.

[01:13:59] **HOWARD:** They didn't?

[01:13:59] **GUS:** Well, that's news to me.

[01:14:00] **HOWARD:** And Bridges after the—right as the war was winding down, he said, "We're concerned about the security of the unions in the post-war period, and we're willing to do away with strikes, permanently. They're outmoded. We don't need to do that anymore."

[01:14:13] **FRED:** I've never heard that.

[01:14:14] **HOWARD:** You've never heard that?

[01:14:15] **FRED:** No. Who's your source on that? Who's that source on that account?

[01:14:20] **HOWARD:** These are widely-cited things. I think he it said, but—

[01:14:23] **FRED:** Who's your source? Can you pinpoint the source?

[01:14:25] **HOWARD:** Union proceedings and stuff like that.

[01:14:27] **GUS:** Well, have you checked it?

[01:14:29] **HOWARD:** I'll check it again, yeah.

[01:14:31] **GUS:** If you have—because yeah. As far as I'm concerned, and this has always been my feeling, the reason that I was not turned by a lot of the stuff that was handed down for us was because I was in close contact with Harry Bridges' policy. I read his columns constantly. Issues arise on the Waterfront, and people are asking questions and getting into debates, and often you had to take your independent position, but I would always check back to the column and see if Harry sent back anything. And always—almost always I am. If I made a mistake I would correct myself because he would explain it in such a way that I saw my mistake.

For instance, I was opposed to Harry when he advocated the eight-hour day I thought after the war, all workers will go back to the six-hour day. And I did not realize why Harry wanted the eight-hour day. For one thing, it would've raised the hourly wage and they would not be able to lay us off after six hours, they would have to work us eight hours, same as everybody else. Now right, we have taken out their weapon of penalizing workers, and that was only one of them. And after we cut the hours back from ten to eight that was a tremendous gain. That was Harry's thinking, I didn't realize that at the time. I caught onto it very quickly, but I made mistake of being against Harry on the six-hour day. But it's been about the only time I have been against Harry and not understood what he was advocating and I always supported it.

[01:16:17] **HOWARD:** Were there any people in the union after the war, Local 19, who argued the thing I'm arguing? About Bridges' sold us out during the war.

[01:16:24] **FRED:** Yes!

[01:16:25] **HOWARD:** Were there people saying that?

[01:16:25] **FRED:** Oh yes! We had a the old ILA, bunch of reactionaries We had the sense of—

[01:16:30] **HOWARD:** You heard those arguments before?

[01:16:31] **FRED:** Oh yes. We had the Cincinnatus [New Order of Cincinnatus] down there, the Masons—not the Mason organization but guys who belong to the Masons were mostly the foremen. They were organized. The Roman Catholics were organized. The [?Mantle Club?] were organized. We had them reactionaries working in the—I can pinpoint all of them. We knew all of them. And we were always on the defense, us so-called liberals.

[01:16:50] **GUS:** It's not the same thing you're talking about.

[01:16:55] **HOWARD:** What are you talking about?

[01:16:55] **FRED:** What I'm talking about—you asked me what the reactionaries on the old local.

[01:17:00] **HOWARD:** Yeah, well, the people who were critical of Bridges during the war.

[01:17:02] **FRED:** Yes, indeed I've mentioned—they were all anti-Bridges. In fact, my brother went to a convention down in Los Angeles one time. Six delegates and five of them were anti-Bridges. And that was [?Joe Marshall?] . And [?Pete Erikson?] , and [?Jack Doyle?] and all of them kind of guys, were all anti-Bridges!

[01:17:17] **HOWARD:** These are ILWU people?

[01:17:18] **FRED:** They belonged to our local here! But they went down— [?George Gibson?] was another one of them. They all went down there and were anti-Harry Bridges. And Tom Ridges—and my brother was the only guy that hold the right, straight down the line. He told me, “If you told them what you thought, you'd get dumped on!”

[01:17:33] **GUS:** It's not the same point that you were raising though. Is it?

[01:17:38] **HOWARD:** Okay, why don't you explain what you think?

[01:17:43] **GUS:** Now a lot of people during the war, for instance, in the AFL, we had quite a strike movement down in the lumber industry.

[01:17:52] **HOWARD:** During the war?

[01:17:53] **GUS:** During the war. And the—in turn, they didn't have a strike, they went fishing. And no program coming from their leadership, no opposition to it. And the—I worked in the IWA mill and we had the program a no-strike pledge. We were opposed—you know, just walking around. They had no program, just stopped working and most of it, I had the feeling at the time, that it was an anti-Roosevelt movement. This was shortly before the election in 1940.

[01:18:33] **HOWARD:** Were there any work stoppages on the waterfront by the way?

[01:18:37] **GUS:** ‘Thirty—‘34 and ‘44. Not on the waterfront.

[01:18:44] **HOWARD:** None in Seattle? No job actions of any sort? Even sort of small, informal things that you can remember, anyway?

[01:18:51] **GUS:** No, but we have a grievance machinery, where we—any grievance that arose would be taken care of. And a strike was not wanted, but just like Bridges said, you take—you cut the longshoremen's wages and throw our contract out the window. You'll have plenty of strikes on your hands right on the West Coast.

[01:19:24] **FRED:** You see, that's the thing about our industry—

[01:19:26] **GUS:** And the thinking behind—what Harry was saying, “If you do that you'll demoralize the rank-and-file of the longshoremen on the West Coast until you will have nothing but trouble.”

[01:19:40] **FRED:** That's obvious. But anyway, I would've—this is the little thing, you know, we're an industry that's—there's no, nothing like these longshoremen in the trade union movement. In the first place, we don't come under the fair wages in our end, you know that. See we're a casual worker. So that when we go to work today, when I went to work, you're not guaranteed eight hours. So you see, the state of the gang I was at, I was so harassed on the Waterfront, probably Gus knows something about that. The FBI had me down and I was

going to, I couldn't get passes, you know. They couldn't get me passes! Even my brother's kids, who were in the service over the Korean War, they wouldn't get them passed on.

[01:20:19] **HOWARD:** Let me go off the tape for one second and ask you both something.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

[01:20:21] **FRED:** Are you on tape?

[01:20:21] **HOWARD:** We're on tape. You want to say something—we'll talk about it a bit later on. So we've got through the war period, the other questions I want to ask about the war are what happened to the stability of the work groups? In other words, how many guys left the waterfront during the war? Do you have any idea? Either to join the military, or to go to other industries?

[01:20:45] **FRED:** Oh that's a tough question.

[01:20:46] **HOWARD:** It is.

[01:20:46] **FRED:** But I'll tell you, before that we had, at the beginning of the war, we had a lot of our people going to the shipyards.

[01:20:52] **HOWARD:** Oh you did? Why?

[01:20:55] **FRED:** Well, because there was more money in it I guess. Because we didn't get any raise in wages. I think we were getting ordinary, well, I forget—but anyway—do you remember them guys? And then, the manpower shortage comes! So we had to get them guys out of the shipyards. And there was one state—I was in committee work all during that war, you know, I knew all that was going on. I'd meet with the captains and the generals, and I was always defending the union. Because I was always looking at the aftermath of this war, what we'd agreed now on what would be the set practice that they would institute, saying “You guys have done that now, let's have it in the contract.” But—I lost my track there.

[01:21:32] **HOWARD:** You were talking about the guys in the shipyards and the man power.

[01:21:35] **FRED:** So, anyway, later on, the only team that came ahead longshoring was combat ship repairing for manpower, did you know that? The only thing that came ahead of manpower was combat ship repair. We were so essential and that'd be obvious. We were the main line of communication, if we failed—like that general said, when they strike, we'd lose the war on the Mediterranean.

[01:21:58] **HOWARD:** Were the longshoremen given occupational deferments or did it depend on—

[01:22:01] **FRED:** You're damn right we had—I was on the clearance committee—

[01:22:04] **HOWARD:** Nobody else seems to think so.

[01:22:06] **FRED:** Well, I'll tell you, I'll give you some examples of it. I mean to say the men going into service?

[01:22:11] **HOWARD:** Yeah, given deferment for the draft.

[01:22:13] **FRED:** No, they were key men that they put in the—what do they call them—the Seabees [Construction Battalion, abbreviated as C.B. or Seabee] !

[01:22:18] **HOWARD:** Longshore battalions and the Seabees.

[01:22:19] **FRED:** That's where they had a lot of key men over there!

[01:22:21] **HOWARD:** Do you have any idea how many of them were drafted? Out of Local 19?

[01:22:22] **FRED:** We got a list of them.

[01:22:22] **HOWARD:** You do?

[01:22:22] **FRED:** We got a list of them, yeah.

[01:22:22] **HOWARD:** You sure?

[01:22:22] **GUS:** No, but are you sure of the people who were drafted were. Some of them who volunteered.

[01:22:34] **FRED:** Most of them—they all volunteered!

[01:22:35] **HOWARD:** Either way, yeah. See what I'm trying to figure out—

[01:22:38] **FRED:** Some were drafted like [?Percy Green?] , he was—

[01:22:40] **HOWARD:** What happened to the labor force during the war?

[01:22:42] **FRED:** Of longshoremen?

[01:22:43] **HOWARD:** Yeah, in other words, this is the thesis I'm working with, did a lot of the guys who built the union maybe, were sort of taken out of the industry and scattered out all across the country and it broke all the solidarity of the men. Is that possible?

[01:22:55] **FRED:** No.

[01:22:55] **GUS:** No.

[01:22:56] **FRED:** Tons of guys who were drafted weren't really leaders in the local.

[01:23:00] **GUS:** They were young.

[01:23:01] **FRED:** They were too young!

[01:23:03] **HOWARD:** So the people who were drafted that were the young ones?

[01:23:05] **FRED:** They were the young ones and they were old then, as far as I'm concerned. They were 45. Some of them were—there was a guy by the named of [?Frye?] . No relation to the businesses but the another Frye was a very handy guy. He worked on the sling. And he went into the army and went in as a soldier to the South Pacific. He was a World War I veteran. He was enlisted. He was a sergeant.

[01:23:29] **GUS:** World War I, he was not in the Second World War.

[01:23:31] **FRED:** He was in World War II! I said he enlisted in World War II and he was in the South Pacific, that Frye.

[01:23:34] **GUS:** That was a different Frye, then.

[01:23:35] **FRED:** Well, the Frye that I'm talking about, he was as old as I am! I am 86! He must've been close to me.

[01:23:42] **GUS:** Very anti-Harry, very anti-Roosevelt.

[01:23:45] **FRED:** Well, that guy never said nothing.

[01:23:47] **GUS:** It's not the guy I was thinking.

[01:23:48] **FRED:** This guy was a nice guy to talk to. Quiet. Never assumed anything and he was a sergeant, and he told me about leading them young punks over there when they were capturing in some—

[01:23:57] **HOWARD:** How many war-babies were hired during the war? Do you have any idea? So-called war-babies?

[01:24:03] **FRED:** What do you mean war-babies?

[01:24:03] **HOWARD:** Well, people who were hired during the war on the waterfront. Years later on, they used to call them the war-babies.

[01:24:09] **FRED:** You mean after the war?

[01:24:10] **HOWARD:** No, during the war.

[01:24:12] **FRED:** Well, during the war we didn't hire any of them in particular, it was just good for man power. We just wanted man power.

[01:24:18] **HOWARD:** No, yeah. That's what I'm saying. How many green recruits did you hire, essentially?

[01:24:23] **GUS:** What was the work force during the war?

[01:24:24] **FRED:** Probably 1600, 1700 people.

[01:24:27] **HOWARD:** And what was it before the war?

[01:24:29] **GUS:** Well, I think it was a lot more than that.

[01:24:31] **FRED:** I wouldn't say so. Well, we might've had some surplus but I'm talking about members of the union.

[01:24:34] **GUS:** No, yeah, no.

[01:24:35] **FRED:** You're talking about the work force 2500. Twenty-five hundred. The workforce was 2500.

[01:24:42] **GUS:** Even more than that I estimate.

[01:24:44] **FRED:** No, because we worked long hours. In those days we had no limits on the hours. They worked all day and they'd go on and—

[01:24:52] **HOWARD:** So you took on a lot of new guys, right? A lot of green recruits, so-called.

[01:24:55] **GUS:** Yes.

[01:24:55] **FRED:** Well there was! Because I recall, see I was in the clearance committee during that war, and that was kind of an important job. We had a committee elected down on—not elected on the port [inaudible]

_____.
Dewey Bennett was on it and that other guy, who was the president of the local, he was on the—he was kind of a . . .overseer of the longshoremen—on the manpower deal was what it was!

[01:25:22] **GUS:** I got my job about that time, and we all had to clear through Bennett.

[01:25:26] **FRED:** That's right.

[01:25:26] **GUS:** And he was the former secretary of Local 19.

[01:25:29] **HOWARD:** What was the clearance for? To see if you were subversive or something? Or just qualified or—?

[01:25:33] **GUS:** No, no. Qualified, I would say.

[01:25:35] **FRED:** And another thing too, was that they didn't want guys leaving the industry. You see, you couldn't go on and work off the longshoremen and go to work someplace else. I was on the clearance committee, you see. And they'd come up, and they would want to go on the—of course there Black guys from Chicago and they were really ignorant guys, we were glad to get rid of because they were troublemakers. So I used to tell them, "Okay, fellow we're giving you a clearance, but understand, you can't work in any key industry for 30 days. You're on your own, get going." We're glad to be rid of them guys. They were bad guys, gangsters.

And so that was one of the things, and we had lots of important things that happened during the war. I went on some secret meetings that were—I remember one time we had a meeting up in the buildings, the white building was one of them buildings up in Fourth, Third and some big shots come up from Washington and we got called—manpower. Manpower! You know the longshoremen were the key thing in that whole war! Did you know that? They were the line of communication, if that broke down, what the hell could the Army do! They have nothing. Couldn't get the soldiers there. They couldn't get their supplies there. But this guy, he got talking, he said, "Well, we're short of men on the waterfront"! We were really short on manpower because—he said, "You guys think can use some women down there?" And I says, "Well, if they were working, we could use them." But I said, "There wouldn't be a hell of a lot of work going on down there." They all laughed. Then you get the procedures of the meeting in an envelope. You read it and you destroyed it.

[01:27:03] **HOWARD:** What about after the war? Did many of the guys who had gone out of the industry come back?

[01:27:07] **FRED:** Yes, a lot came back.

[01:27:08] **HOWARD:** They did? What proportion do you think came back? Do you have any idea?

[01:27:11] **FRED:** I should say 99 percent.

[01:27:13] **HOWARD:** So almost everybody that took a withdrawal from the union during the war returned?

[01:27:16] **FRED:** I know there was one guy—two guys who didn't come back. One guy stayed in the Philippine islands. And another guy went into the hardware business in Georgetown [neighborhood in Seattle] . That was the only two guys. That didn't come back.

[01:27:28] **GUS:** The time spent in the Army was accumulated as seniority.

[01:27:38] **HOWARD:** Counted for seniority?

[01:27:39] **FRED:** They never lost anything. This goes when the pool and the extra labor force—the seniority accrued while they were way.

[01:27:46] **GUS:** Not that they were in the union or not, if they had worked with commitment. That at the time spent in the Army counted towards seniority.

[01:27:55] **HOWARD:** Now how about after the war? Was there a glut of manpower in Seattle?

[01:27:59] **GUS:** Tremendously.

[01:28:00] **HOWARD:** How was that handled?

[01:28:02] **GUS:** It was done away with by attrition.

[BOTH TALKING AT ONCE]

[01:28:11] **HOWARD:** Is that right? So there was no plan, then, for bringing in some men and a few others.

[01:28:16] **FRED:** I'll tell you what I think we did there one time. There was such little work on the waterfront we got in at an hourly basis for a while. Were you on the beach then? We got in at an hourly basis. You worked so many hours, then you couldn't work then the other guys. Something on the system they had down in San Francisco.

[01:28:32] **GUS:** But not the people were still permit men.

[01:28:35] **FRED:** Oh no, this are the longshoremen, I'm talking about the union, I'm not talking about the longshoremen.

[01:28:38] **HOWARD:** So the union men shared what little work there was and permit men tried to hang on wherever they could?

[01:28:43] **FRED:** Yeah we shared the work. That's right.

[01:28:44] **GUS:** They got whatever surplus work there was.

[01:28:45] **HOWARD:** How many permit men were there? Do you have any idea?

[01:28:47] **FRED:** Gus can tell you that.

[01:28:48] **GUS:** No, I can't tell, but there were a lot. How many men did Seattle have during the war? What would you say?

[01:28:55] **OUTSIDE VOICE:** I would not guess, I would not make any prediction because we have no records on it and we couldn't get the records and it's foolish to make statements with no record.

[01:29:00] **GUS:** Yeah, that's right. That's the way I feel about it. I can say there were a lot of us.

[01:29:00] **OUTSIDE VOICE:** Are we off the record?

[01:29:01] **HOWARD:** Do you want me to go off the record?

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

[01:29:10] **FRED:** Yeah. The old days, and of course all of it they got to have meetings and they'd make records of those meetings and it goes to the government, you know that? The treasury, and they go through the financial reports, that's what we're looking at. But the story goes that the hold was made in the hall, for example this big. No chairs.

[01:29:30] **HOWARD:** Oh I know that one.

[01:29:32] **FRED:** The other guys were standing up, the guys reading the resolution would say, "All in favor of this signified by standing up." They're all standing up. Remember they could sit down, but there was no place to sit down!

[01:29:42] **HOWARD:** Yeah, that's a famous [Joseph P.] Ryan move.

Yeah, alright let's go through this fast because we have to get out of here in ten minutes?

[01:29:52] **GUS:** Yeah.

[01:29:57] **HOWARD:** Alright, here we go, ready? Boom.

Now we're going into the post-war period and Bridges takes some controversial stands on Korea and screening. What happened to Local 19? Gus, what happened? Was there a right-winger and anti-Bridges faction that formed?

[01:30:13] **GUS:** Not exactly like that, but it was one time—and this had happened many times—Harry often took stands where he did not get the support of the people and he was always very outspoken and they did not always agree with him. But the rank-and-file gave him the same right to speak out freely as he gave the rank-and-file. Every time when he chaired and if anybody tried to heckle somebody who was attacked, even attacking Harry's ideas! As long as it was not personal. Harry would protect that guy's right to speak. And the rank-and-file accorded Harry the same rights. There was no actually rank-and-file bore no Harry no grudge because of his position on Korea. And it was only for a short time that they absolutely disagreed with him. The rank-and-file of Local 19 went along with [Harry S.] Truman's policy in Korea when that war first broke out. But it wasn't very long before opinions started to change amongst of the rank-and-file. Before that war was over, everybody agreed that Harry was right in the first place.

[01:31:30] **HOWARD:** Were actual slates formed in this local? For local elections?

[END PART THREE/BEGIN PART FOUR]

[01:31:40] **GUS:** We had no slates around there.

[01:31:43] **FRED:** I know there was no really slates—

[01:31:44] **HOWARD:** Were there right-wing candidates? So-called?

[01:31:46] **FRED:** Oh, absolutely, yes. You know that Harry Bridges, during the Korean War, made a solution during the Korean War if you recall. And they called him everything. And that was one of the things that came up during his last trial I believe when Telford Taylor defended him. Do you remember Telford Taylor [lawyer and opposition to Joseph McCarthy] ? And the program that Harry Bridges laid out was how they settled the goddamn thing! But the program Harry Bridges laid out during the Korean War.

[01:32:15] **HOWARD:** What was the basis of the right-wing opposition? If a right-winger was running around Local 19 around 1950 or '51, what was he saying to people?

[01:32:22] **GUS:** What was it? [hand gesture]

[01:32:24] **HOWARD:** Waving the flag?

[01:32:25] **GUS:** That's about all it was. It the serve the nationalism.

[01:32:26] **FRED:** They used that red-baiting.

[01:32:28] **GUS:** And red-baiting.

[01:32:29] **FRED:** Red-baiting.

[01:32:30] **HOWARD:** And that had an impact, apparently, on some men?

[01:32:33] **FRED:** Well it didn't seem to me, I got elected to a lot of jobs.

[01:32:33] **HOWARD:** You did?

[01:32:37] **FRED:** Oh yes. And hell, I was elected to the most important jobs in the union.

[01:32:42] **HOWARD:** Were you pretty much recognized as a left-winger, radical?

[01:32:44] **FRED:** Oh yes. And one fellow, one punk come up to me once and said, "Hello, comrade," to me during the war and well I says, "By god, what kind of veteran are you? Are you a veteran?" He says, "No." And I says, "You have no right to call me 'comrade.'" I said, "We address our people in the Veteran of Foreign Wars as Comrade Commander. Comrade Gus Rystad." I said, "Why don't you become a soldier and get in the goddamn army. I won't allow you to call me comrade." You see. Things like that. I shut that guy up.

[01:33:09] **GUS:** Yeah, the McCarthy period had its effect in the election on the type of people elected.

[01:33:20] **FRED:** We got some very reactionary guys.

[01:33:21] **GUS:** There's no question about that. And the record from way back in Local 19 has, it has been kind of Wobbly and not too progressively. We have had outstanding progressive people like Tom, but we've had a lot of reactionaries from here.

[01:33:39] **HOWARD:** Who's Tom?

[01:33:40] **FRED:** Tom, my brother.

[01:33:40] **HOWARD:** Oh, your brother.

[01:33:41] **FRED:** He died here last February. He was one of the best leaders we ever had. They couldn't stir that guy.

[01:33:46] **GUS:** Yeah, and Johnny [?Milada?] was also a—

[01:33:48] **FRED:** Yeah, very militant guy, Johnny.

[01:33:49] **GUS:** Yeah, but not a Marxist, or anything like that—

[01:33:52] **FRED:** He was just a good union guy.

[01:33:55] **GUS:** Later again, [Martin] Jugum has played a tremendous role in our organization.

[01:34:00] **HOWARD:** He was progressive, right?

[01:34:03] **FRED:** He was at Normandy in the invasion. He went through that stuff.

[01:34:06] **GUS:** He was solid. He was working class. The guy's solid. And much of what I said about the rank-and-file, being unconscious Marxists, holds to the—at least the way that he works.

[01:34:23] **FRED:** [muttering at the same time as Gus is speaking] They charged me about 450 dollars, I better get the hell out of here.

[01:34:27] **HOWARD:** Okay, we've got about five minutes over here, okay? I want to ask you one final set of questions here. I know we're pressed for time—

[01:34:31] **GUS:** We'll be short.

[01:34:31] **HOWARD:** The basic one is why did Bridges stay around as long as he did? How much did his politics have to do with it? Were his politics a help or hindrance in his ability to stay around politically? You know what I mean? He's taking his views that he took, did it help him or hurt him?

[01:34:50] **FRED:** It hurt him!

[01:34:51] **HOWARD:** It hurt him?

[01:34:51] **FRED:** It sure did. But now that we begin to see the light, like I had that professor of history, that guy up at the Ballard school and I got through to that guy. I didn't know that, he says, "I didn't know Bridges was that kind of guy." And I said, "Go up to the library to start reading about the history of the revolution. Go up and read the history of labor that'll tell you all about—"

[01:35:08] **HOWARD:** Okay, what about, if you say that his politics hurt him, let me throw another perspective on this, what about Bridges' vision?—Uh-oh. Here comes the left-winger again [referring to person passing through] [laugh]—Bridges' vision of a better society? Right? Which he always talked about, did that help or hurt—?

[01:35:24] **GUS:** I—well I disagree with your first thing—answer. What's your answer to that one?

[01:35:30] **FRED:** Oh, well what I say, is that it hurt him up to a point. Until the people started to get educated and they cleared up all these things and they did to him, down there, you know? Telford Taylor defended him. He was a retired Brigadier general, and with the statements then that some of the Supreme Court Justice made—one guy said that this was, “man’s intolerance to man”! Remember that quote? See things like that. And he has a following.

And now here's what's happening to Bridges on the post-labor thing that he retired—there's a damn movement down there where they're isolating poor old Harry! The leadership in our local were not for him at all! As I get up and told the guys like Gus and Rosco. Rosco is the secretary's delegate, he's an executive member of our coast set-up. And they're isolating poor old Harry, instead of using him for—he's opposing America, anyway. See that's the way that's kind of how the movement is rigged. They took our active vote away from us. Saying that kind of horse shit.

[01:36:31] **HOWARD:** Is that kind of how you see it? That his politics were a liability, essentially?

[01:36:34] **GUS:** No, it was not. If Harry had not had his politics, did not have his vision, he would not—he would not have been Harry Bridges. We would not have heard much about him.

[01:36:47] **FRED:** But his politics come up and it hurt him during that time, because there was so much goddamn red-baiting—

[01:36:52] **GUS:** Harry Bridges took a class approach in his trade union work—

[01:36:58] **FRED:** Well, I'm going to leave in a minute.

[01:36:59] **HOWARD:** Okay, before you go, let me get your address or something like that. I'd like to copy that article too—are you going to be upstairs or something?

[01:37:05] **FRED:** I'm going to be around. I got get the [inaudible] ____.

[01:37:07] **HOWARD:** Okay, I'll find you.

[01:37:07] **FRED:** How long are you going to be around?

[01:37:08] **HOWARD:** Well, I got to leave at 12:30 today.

[01:37:11] **FRED:** All right, I'll be around.

[01:37:12] **HOWARD:** Okay, fine.

[01:37:12] **FRED:** It won't be too long for me to pay these guys off and you can take your notes and I'll do a little reading.

[01:37:18] **HOWARD:** Okay, great. You don't have to leave yet, do you?

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

[01:37:24] **GUS:** Well, that's all I can do, you got the idea.

[01:37:28] **HOWARD:** Why don't you just repeat what you just said then?

[01:37:30] **GUS:** Okay, well, it's hard to—

[01:37:31] **HOWARD:** I know.

[01:37:32] **GUS:** It's about inspiration. When you say something you can't actually repeat mechanically again.

[01:37:36] **HOWARD:** I know, well you were talking about his politics rubbing off on people.

[01:37:40] **GUS:** I think at the convention, I have written a lot of letters to Harry, I received a lot of letters from Harry. And when I am in doubt about something, or it's a new problem and you feel new developments and that I will put down my own thoughts on it to the best of my ability, work it out, and send it to him. [inaudible] _____ to his response to it. And if once in a while, he sometimes he has written that—thank you [aside] —that “you express my sentiment.” It's not necessarily—in fully—now it's not on that?

[01:38:28] **HOWARD:** No.

[01:38:28] **GUS:** It's not necessarily in full agreement. And other times, he'll come out very positive to me. Now they said—Martin is very familiar with this—down in around San Francisco particularly, they said that Harry endorsed Nixon. Harry said—I have that in writing—“That's a lie.” But Hawai'i endorsing Nixon. Hall recommended it, but the ILWU never did—

[01:39:07] **HOWARD:** Hall recommended it?

[01:39:09] **GUS:** That's—I have that in writing.

[01:39:10] **HOWARD:** That's hard to believe.

[01:39:14] **GUS:** Not Gus Hall.

[01:39:17] **HOWARD:** Jack Hall.

[01:39:18] **GUS:** Jack Hall.

[01:39:18] **HOWARD:** Yeah, right of course. But he was one of the more left-wing people in the union, right?

[01:39:23] **GUS:** What you say about that—yep exactly!

[01:39:26] **HOWARD:** Why—and they called you a progressive! Just old guy in woods, right?

[01:39:27] **GUS:** I'll tell you one thing, I'll tell you one thing, Harry does not lie. He'll make mistakes, like any other human being, but he does not lie. Isn't that true?

[01:39:44] **HOWARD:** Yeah, okay. I think we got what we needed here.

[01:39:48] **GUS:** Okay. [laughs]

[END OF PART FOUR]